

Community Engagement Framework

Engagement Framework

9 April, 2024



Image 1: Simon, Yasmin and Ella
Centre for Homelessness Impact

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Homes Victoria funded the Community Engagement Framework and Support as part of the Community Housing Sector Development Fund. The Fund enables a range of initiatives to build the capacity of not-for-profit housing agencies and ensures they have the tools required to manage the growth of social and affordable housing in the Big Housing Build and beyond.



Village Well acknowledges and celebrates the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways, seas and skies that together make up the places on which we live, work, learn and play. We recognise their role as great contributors to the care and maintenance of place and value their ongoing deep care and knowledge of Country that continues to be passed on through generations.

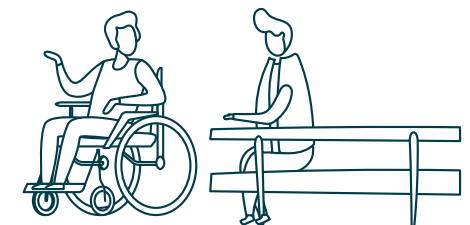
As placemakers, we understand the impact that disconnecting from Country can have, and acknowledge the impacts of colonisation on the oldest living culture in the world. We are committed to support the continued wisdom and practices of First Nations Peoples, and strive to work collaboratively to nourish Country - our plants, animals, communities, neighbourhoods, cities and the planet - for now and future generations.



Image 2: Traditional tools of the Wurundjeri Peoples

Contents

About this framework	2	03 Toolkit	20	04 Case studies	49
Engagement summary	3				
Benefits of engagement	4	Project planning	21	Burnham Beeches, Sherbrooke, VIC	50
Engagement Principles	5	Understanding engagement needs	22	West End, West Melbourne, VIC	51
		Engagement questionnaire	23	Transition towns and cities, City of Banyule, VIC	52
		Engagement complexity matrix	24	New Epping, Melbourne VIC	53
01 Context	6	Stakeholder mapping	25		
		Reachability matrix	26		
Housing policy context	7	Stakeholder engagement planning	27	Additional resources	54
Why people object to Community Housing	8	Resource bank	28	References	55
		Engagement plan	29		
02 Best practice	10	Engagement types	31		
		Engagement agenda	36		
Why best practice community engagement?	11	Run-sheet	39		
Engagement principles	12	Tips: the art of holding space	41		
Principle 01 : Wisdom lies in the community	13	Gathering an evidence base	42		
Principle 02: Authentic and transparent	14	Impact measurement	43		
Principle 03: Educate, inspire, empower	15	Best practice example engagement methods	44		
Principle 04: Commitment	16	Before design	45		
Trauma-informed facilitation	17	Design stages	46		
Engagement levels	18	Planning review	47		
Best practice engagement process	19	Post approval/construction	48		



About this framework

Best practice community engagement

Framework purpose

This framework intends to provide knowledge and tools to improve engagement practices in the Community Housing (CH) sector across Victoria within the context of delivering new homes.

Framework aims

This framework aims to help Community Housing Organisations (CHOs) feel empowered and prepared to undertake community engagement.

It aims to help CHOs and their staff understand engagement needs, uses, processes and complexities.

What the framework is not!

The framework is intended as a guide to increase the capacity of the CH sector to deliver appropriate and impactful engagement, specifically around the delivery of new CH homes. Whilst the framework may help with other aspects of engagement, it is not intended for any of these purposes.

How to use this framework

The framework is in four parts:

01 – Background

The first section provides the context for this framework. It includes an overview of the policy and politics that CHOs are operating within.

02 – Best Practice

The second section provides higher-level knowledge and understanding around best practice engagement for CHOs and the benefits of best practice approaches. It includes an explanation of engagement principles, high-level concepts, and education.

03 – Toolkit

The third section provides tools and tips for setting up engagement for success. It provides usable tools that aid in understanding engagement needs, setting up engagement budgets and plans, and planning, reporting on and evaluating your engagement activity.

04 – Case studies

The final section includes case studies showcasing how the engagement process has helped with projects on different scales and complexity.



“My aspiration for the framework is an empowered and confident community housing sector able to work side-by-side with councils and communities to drive social and affordable housing growth.”

CHIA Vic Reference panel member

Framework Development

In October 2023, Village Well facilitated two workshops to gain input into this Best Practice Engagement Framework.

Representatives from CHOs, CHIA Vic, Homes Victoria, Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and local Councils shared their aspirations, key stakeholders, challenges, opportunities, engagement experiences, and stigma faced in developing Community Housing in Victoria.



2
workshops



26
participants



8
in-person



18
digital

Aspirations



Welcoming and
supportive communities



Better engagement
outcomes



Clear and usable
framework



Confident and
supported CHOs

Key insights

Top challenge



Stigma and lack of education

Top opportunity



Chance to educate

Top engagement technique



Relationship building

Benefits of engagement

Gaining local, relevant knowledge

Community engagement is a way to understand the needs of a community and plan appropriately,¹ understand what would be of value to the community,² and increase input of those who generally have less influence.³



Build support and trust

Community engagement is a way to attain and sustain trust and support from communities,⁴ and enhance social relationships.⁵ Trust is the basis of people participating in community in a positive way.



Save time and costs

By reducing community objections and increasing the ability to foresee upcoming barriers, positive community engagement can save both time and money.⁶ During engagement, expectations can be managed to be realistic and achievable.⁷ Seeking early and informed community input can improve project design and performance.⁸



Increase social benefits

Community engagement is an opportunity to increase in community awareness, involve those of less influence, build community capacity and resilience,⁹ and build a deeper and better understanding of the challenges faced, by both the community and project team.¹⁰



Image 3: Naomi and her daughter
Aaron Chown/PA Wire/Centre for Homelessness Impact

Engagement Principles

Principle 01 – Wisdom lies in the community

The people we engage all have a unique and valid point of view that should be respected and valued. We can uphold this principle through deep listening, respect, inclusion, collaboration, and power with and not over the community. It takes many hands to make a great place, and embracing community wisdom, including CHO residents and those with lived experience, should underpin meaningful engagement.

Principle 02 – Authentic and transparent

This principle draws on the importance of authentic and genuine approaches in community engagement. While no one is perfect, we can yield positive engagement outcomes by embracing honesty and empathy. We can demonstrate authenticity and transparency through clarity, respect, and meaningful processes.

Principle 03 – Educate, inspire, empower

This principle highlights engagement as a tool for educating, inspiring and empowering people. It can be achieved through encouragement, motivation, celebrating people and achievements, aiming to enlighten, and helping people on a journey to improvement.

Principle 04 – Commitment

This principle acknowledges that great engagement takes commitment and time. During engagement processes, staying realistic, flexible, and dedicated is essential. Great engagement should be a collective responsibility, requiring proper resourcing and prioritisation from both CHOs and individuals.

Principle 1



Wisdom lies in the community

Principle 2



Authentic and transparent

Principle 3



Educate, inspire, empower

Principle 4



Commitment

Community Engagement Framework

01 Context



Housing policy context

To address the current housing crisis in Australia, all levels of government are increasingly getting involved in funding or supporting the construction of new social and affordable housing.

Current programs include:

- The Federal Government's Housing Australia Future Fund and Social Housing Accelerator
- The Victorian State Government's Big Housing Build, Housing Statement, and streamlined planning provisions for social and affordable housing projects
- Local government initiatives to support affordable housing, including the use of surplus council land for community housing

Although welcome, the injection of funding and support has resulted in social housing developing faster and at a larger scale than it has been for many decades. This is increasing public awareness and scrutiny of community housing projects.

Significant confusion and misinformation around

social housing can cause local communities to push back against new social housing developments. Despite the presence of streamlined planning pathways, it remains critical for CHOs to engage with communities and build local support for their project, regardless of the level of community engagement required by the relevant statutory planning processes.

This framework can help CHOs with their engagement when:

- Leading a new community housing project
- Leading the re-development of an existing social housing site
- Co-designing a community housing project with the community

Certain aspects of this framework may also help CHOs with their engagement when building support for community housing generally (i.e. not related to a specific project)

Some aspects can also help build capacity for engaging current and future residents, although it is not the focus of this framework.



Image 4: Post-it engagement activity, VW

Why people object to Community Housing

Communities have a history of resisting the inclusion of social housing. CHOs feel there are misconceptions about the people that inhabit CH, with myths and stereotypes fuelling negative perceptions.

The push to increase social housing stock is increasing public awareness and scrutiny of community housing projects. Some of the reasons for this that have been identified are:

- Limited consultation and collaboration
- Feeling excluded from process
- Government overreach
- Transparency issues
- Stereotypes
- Security worries
- Communication shortcomings
- Lack of information
- Inadequate details
- Power taken from local councils

What are communities objecting to?

- Overshadowing and neighbourhood impact.
- Impact on neighbourhood character.
- Effect on green spaces.
- Building height, setbacks, and potential overshadowing of parks.
- Increased traffic, strain on services, and lack of mental health support.
- Worries about public transport accessibility and overall infrastructure impact.
- High-density housing, citing safety and aesthetic concerns.
- Perceived impacts on resources and community aesthetics.
- Dense developments, emphasising issues like tree removal and blocked streets. There has been advocacy for lower-density alternatives to preserve neighbourhood amenity.

See below for references on community resistance.

CHIA Vic. (2023). Support for Community Housing.

Allison, C. (2022). Social housing proposal creates tension, amid desperate need in Shepparton.

Steen, SF. (2021). Residents weigh in on Shiel St housing plans.

Eddie, R. Booker, C. (2021). Residents push back on state's social housing blitz.

Murray, R. (2021). High-density housing uproar.



Common reasons for CH stigma

CHIA Vic Reference Group Workshop



**“It takes many
hands to
make a
great place”**

– Gilbert Rochecouste,
Village Well Founder
and Director

Community Engagement Framework

02 Best practice



Why best practice community engagement?

The opportunity

Through new policies and legislation, community engagement is seen as increasingly crucial to managing community relationships and expectations. Engagement is being seen as a powerful tool to ensure a development responds to local needs and challenges.

Currently, with the rise of inflation and the cost of living crisis, housing affordability is a topic that is on the minds of many more people. With many people looking for solutions to these problems, there is an opportunity for CHOs to show leadership in the housing industry. By showcasing successful outcomes that result from community engagement, CHOs can pave the way for a better future for all.

Risk of not engaging well

Unfortunately, Community Housing has faced opposition and stigma in our communities. The provisions Victoria has introduced to streamline the construction of this much-needed housing has exacerbated these issues. Resulting in communities feeling like they don't have a say in the process any more, there are many examples where unsuccessful engagement practices have led to opposing campaigns by locals and the media.

Despite the above, the new planning provisions actually provide more points for the community to engage deeper and earlier in the process. Government is starting to expect more and better community engagement from the projects they are approving.

What happens?

Best practices Community Engagement processes and tools can lead to:

1. A level of risk management to keep engagement clear and focused.
2. Saving resources, time and money in the short, medium and long term.
3. Allows communities to be heard and have agency and ownership of the process.
4. Delivers better design outcomes by tapping into the communities' practical wisdom of what works and what's missing.
5. Creates a partnership model where services are focused and collaborative.
6. A spirit of collaboration that unlocks creative ideas and the potential of communities.
7. People feel safe and heard with good engagement processes in place.
8. A win-win outcome.



Community engagement helped gain community support for a project where a previous developer received hundreds of objections.

After the use of 'best practice' community engagement processes, the new project plan received no objections. The developer estimated they saved over a million dollars in costs. Find out more in the case study on page 50.

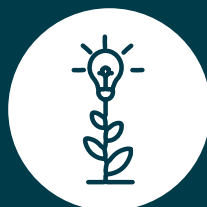
Best practice community engagement techniques helped a CHO create a connected and supportive community. Residents reported feeling more connected to their neighbourhood, treated fairly, and knew their rights and responsibilities significantly above the CHO average responses. Find out more in the case study on page 53.

Engagement principles

The CHIA Vic Engagement Principles provide guiding values when engaging communities

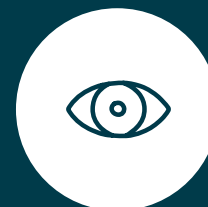
The four principles of best practice engagement were co-designed with the CHIA Vic reference group. These principles provide approaches to community engagement to help improve processes, build relationships, and foster positive outcomes. Following these principles ensures engagement is conducted with integrity and works towards an effective and efficient process for all involved.

The principles are further detailed on the following pages.



01 | Wisdom lies in the community

The people we engage all have a unique and valid point of view that should be respected and valued. We can uphold this principle through deep listening, respect, inclusion, collaboration, and power with and not over the community. It takes many hands to make a great place, and embracing community wisdom, including CHO renters and those with lived experience, should underpin meaningful engagement.



02 | Authentic and transparent

This principle draws on the importance of authentic and genuine approaches in community engagement. While no one is perfect, we can yield positive engagement outcomes by embracing honesty and empathy. We can demonstrate authenticity and transparency through clarity, respect, and meaningful processes.



03 | Educate, inspire and empower

This principle highlights engagement as a tool for educating, inspiring and empowering people. It can be achieved through encouragement, motivation, celebrating people and achievements, aiming to enlighten, and helping people on a journey to improvement.



04 | Commitment

This principle acknowledges that great engagement takes commitment and time. During engagement processes, staying realistic, flexible, and dedicated is essential. Great engagement should be a collective responsibility, requiring proper resourcing and prioritisation from both CHOs and individuals.



Principle 01

Wisdom lies in the community

Tapping into the diverse wisdom of the people that experience where your project sits helps you understand the uniqueness, challenges and opportunities of a place. It is the best way you can get a clear understanding of how a place performs.

People are our most valuable knowledge base

Engagement needs to be curated to the unique make-up of our diverse communities to encourage and capture wisdom from various perspectives and experiences. This leads to more:

- Diverse perspectives
- Inclusivity and representation
- Innovation and creativity
- Community ownership
- Appropriate responses

Engagement that fits

To get the best input from our communities, there is no 'One Size Fits All' response. To ensure we are gaining the most from our engagement practices, we have to ensure that we:

- **Understand and respect differences.** This includes spending time to recognise community needs and capacities.
- **Design inclusive processes.** When designing your engagement, ensure you are considering how you can reach different audiences with diverse backgrounds. Look to elevate voices of those who often get overlooked
- **Celebrate diversity.** Encourage difference and curiosity. Allowing participants to be proud of who they are and share their story can be empowering.

Building a safe space

People will struggle to engage authentically if they do not feel safe. Every person in our communities will have a different view on what 'safety' is. Because of this, there are a few things that can help:

- **We are not all the same.** Understand that your experience is not the same as everyone else's.
- **Learn from others.** Seek information and help when you don't know the answer.
- **Be respectful and honest.** Being genuine and showing respect is the foundation to making someone feel safe to be themselves.
- **It is okay to make mistakes.** No one is perfect and there will be mistakes. Admit and apologise when you are wrong, and use it as a learning experience.

Through doing this, we can:

- Unlock community ownership of the process
- Mobilise energy to take positive action
- Create new allies, leaders and partners
- Unlock local knowledge for more suitable solutions.





Principle 02

Authentic and transparent

Being authentic means being yourself – and this allows others to be themselves too. Being transparent means being clear and honest when communicating – and this is important to building trust and successful outcomes. Streamlined planning “fast-tracks” processes, so ensuring clarity and timeliness is key.

Authentic facilitation skills

Self awareness and facilitation skills are critical in running a successful engagement and process. Some important skills include:

- **Deep Listening.** Deep listening requires focusing on the speaker’s words without preemptively formulating a response. It involves fully connecting with and understanding what the person is communicating. Often repeating things back can show that you have truly heard someone.
- **Validation.** Everyone needs to be heard and validated. It is about deeply reflecting and honouring back what you have heard, whether you agree with it or not.
- **Sitting in a ‘Hotspot’.** We sometimes need to sit in the fire even if it’s really intense. Being able to stay calm and clear-headed is crucial at these times. Gold and gems can appear from the process.
- **Naming ghosts.** Ghosts are the unspoken events, issues and feelings that can be present in the room. Little or no progress can be achieved if ghosts remains unnamed. Sometimes a level of trust and connection is required to be able to name the ghosts in the room.
- **Modeling.** Being your authentic self encourages others to do so too. This is important for people to feel accepted and valued, but also leads to better outcomes for the project.

Clear engagement

Having clear and transparent engagement techniques, agendas and processes allows the community to develop trust.

- **Outlining purpose.** Being clear on what the aims of the engagement are helps participants understand their role in the session.
- **Setting clear expectations.** Ensuring participants are clear on the boundaries of your engagement is crucial to successful engagement.
- **Being honest.** Being true to yourself and the others around you is a great way to build trust. No one can be a perfect facilitator, and it is okay to be unsure, and let the people in the room know.
- **Close the loop.** Ensure that you update people on the outcomes on the engagement they participated in. This can help with alignment and build relationships.

Through doing these processes, we:

- Allow people to feel safe and more open to share true thoughts
- Show vulnerability which in turn allows others to share theirs
- Provide clarity on the engagement process and give people boundaries around what is possible and not possible



Image 5: Leonie, Centre for Homelessness Impact



Principle 03

Educate, inspire, empower

Engagement when used well can be a tool to aid communities to feel heard, bring people together, mobilise action and empower.

Informed engagement

Often we hear people say 'they don't know what they don't know'. Including engagement that informs your participants can both gain better outcomes and empower your participants with new knowledge and understanding.

- **Understand the project place.** Spending time in and research the area you are going to engage in can give you a more informed idea of the concerns that may arise in your engagement and the questions you should be asking.
- **Know your audience.** Each project will sit within an area with people from different backgrounds, life experiences and values. Spend the time to understand who you may be engaging, and how to reach those that may not be engaged as easily.
- **Tailor your engagement.** Once you have an understanding of who you will be engaging, tailor your techniques and methods to suit. A technique that may be suitable for business stakeholders will not be suitable for engaging children at the local primary school, or for reaching culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups.
- **Utilise your position.** Engagement can be used to share information with the public. Engaging the public for a CHO gives you a great position to help challenge some of the stigmas and issues of housing, as well as the actions needed.

Empowering engagement

Engagement can be a powerful tool to empower people by feeling valued and heard, learning new things, making new connections, and allowing them to take action.

- **Knowledge as power with, not over.** When sharing knowledge, it is important to see your role as someone to guide learning and facilitate empowerment, and not to feel the need to be seen as the "expert".
- **Keep people engaged.** Make the process fun and inspiring by using creative and fun activities. Joy and fun can quickly create safety for the group in appropriate circumstances.
- **Handing power over.** Sometimes it is appropriate to hand power back to the community to create a sense of agency on the local level. It's okay to let the community make mistakes for deep learning to happen. An example is helping a resident event planning group form, empowering them to respond to their community needs and wants by developing up an activity program.

Through doing these processes, we:

- Improve community understanding
- Deliver realistic and appropriate engagement
- Gain better input and understanding
- Inspire communities and provide power to act



Image 6: Student engagement



Principle 04

Commitment

Undertaking best practice engagement processes requires a commitment from individuals, teams and CHOs to place importance on the engagement process and understand its value to the success of new community housing.

Realistic resourcing

- **Understanding scope.** Thought and effort needs to be put in at the start of a project to understand the scope of engagement required, how much resourcing it will need, and to plan appropriately.
- **Plan engagement.** Planning engagement is a crucial step to ensuring engagement is appropriate and effective.
- **Resourcing.** Engagement takes time and effort, but can lead to time and cost saving outcomes. Resourcing engagement appropriately needs to be a priority to ensure engagement can be undertaken properly.

Organisation-wide priority

- **Importance.** Successful engagement can lead to more supported and cohesive communities.
- **Share wins.** A great way to share the importance of engagement in an organisation is to share both the great outcomes, and the learnings.
- **Measure and track.** Develop a way to consistently measure your engagement results and share within your organisation.

Ongoing capacity building

- **Seek learning opportunities.** Engagement and facilitation skills are a life-long skill that is developed over time and experience.
- **Practice where you can.** Use circumstances in your everyday life to practice your communication and presentation skills, such as team meetings.
- **Learn from mistakes.** Everyone will make mistakes whilst engaging. Learn from them and grow.
- **Invite and encourage others.** Take people on the journey with you to show the benefits of great engagement.
- **Celebrate others.** Encourage and celebrate people doing great things within your organisation.

Through doing these processes, we:

- Commit to the engagement process
- Plan strategic and appropriate engagement
- Improve individual and organisational capacity and education
- Showcase what great engagement can do and encourage others to join



Image 7: Workshop activity

Trauma-informed facilitation

We are all human

When engaging people, remember that we are all human. Participants bring their whole selves to sessions, and also facilitators do.

In trauma-informed theory, people fluctuate along the 'Trauma spectrum,' depending on their current state, effecting their experience of and with the world. Trauma, including 'small traumas', such as a cumulation of bad events, can cause someone to shift to their wounded self. For example, if someone had a 'bad' morning (being stuck in traffic, spilling their coffee and being yelled at by their boss), they may present to a session in a very different state than if they are having a good day.

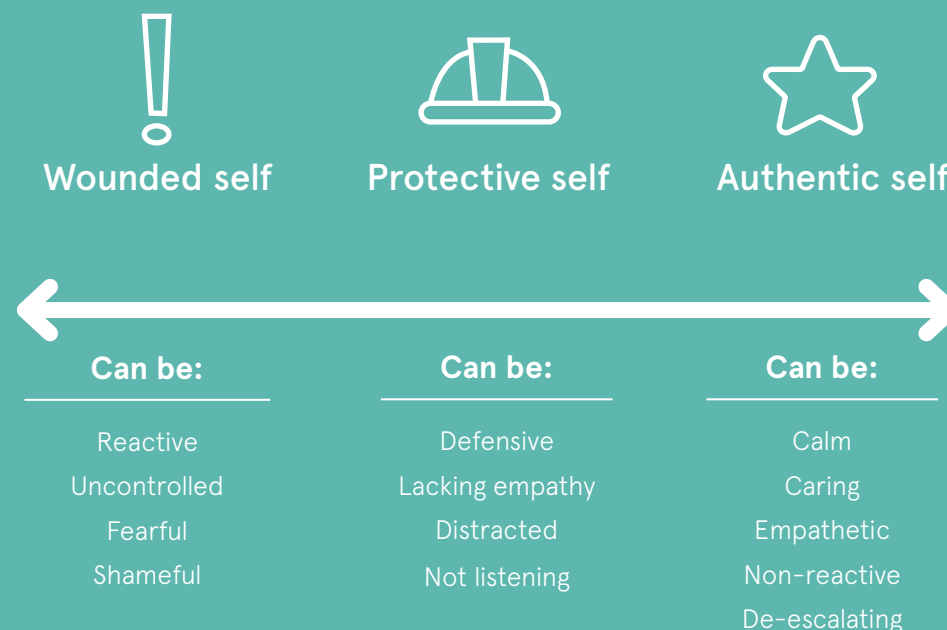
As a facilitator, you should aim to be the most authentic version of yourself whilst helping those in the session stay or move toward their more authentic selves. Participants in their more authentic selves will provide the best engagement outcomes.

Such skills rely on a high level of personal self-awareness. Taking time before an engagement session to check in with yourself can be a great tool in the tool belt of engaging. Deep breathing, taking some time out or talking things through with a trusted someone can help you be more authentic in your engagement delivery.

A facilitator also needs to be alert to participant behaviours resulting from trauma, such as fear, shock, and shame. Noticing these responses can help a facilitator adapt to the need of the session.

When we have the skill of holding and transforming trauma responses, people generally feel safer and can decrease in nervous system activation.

Trauma spectrum



Engagement levels

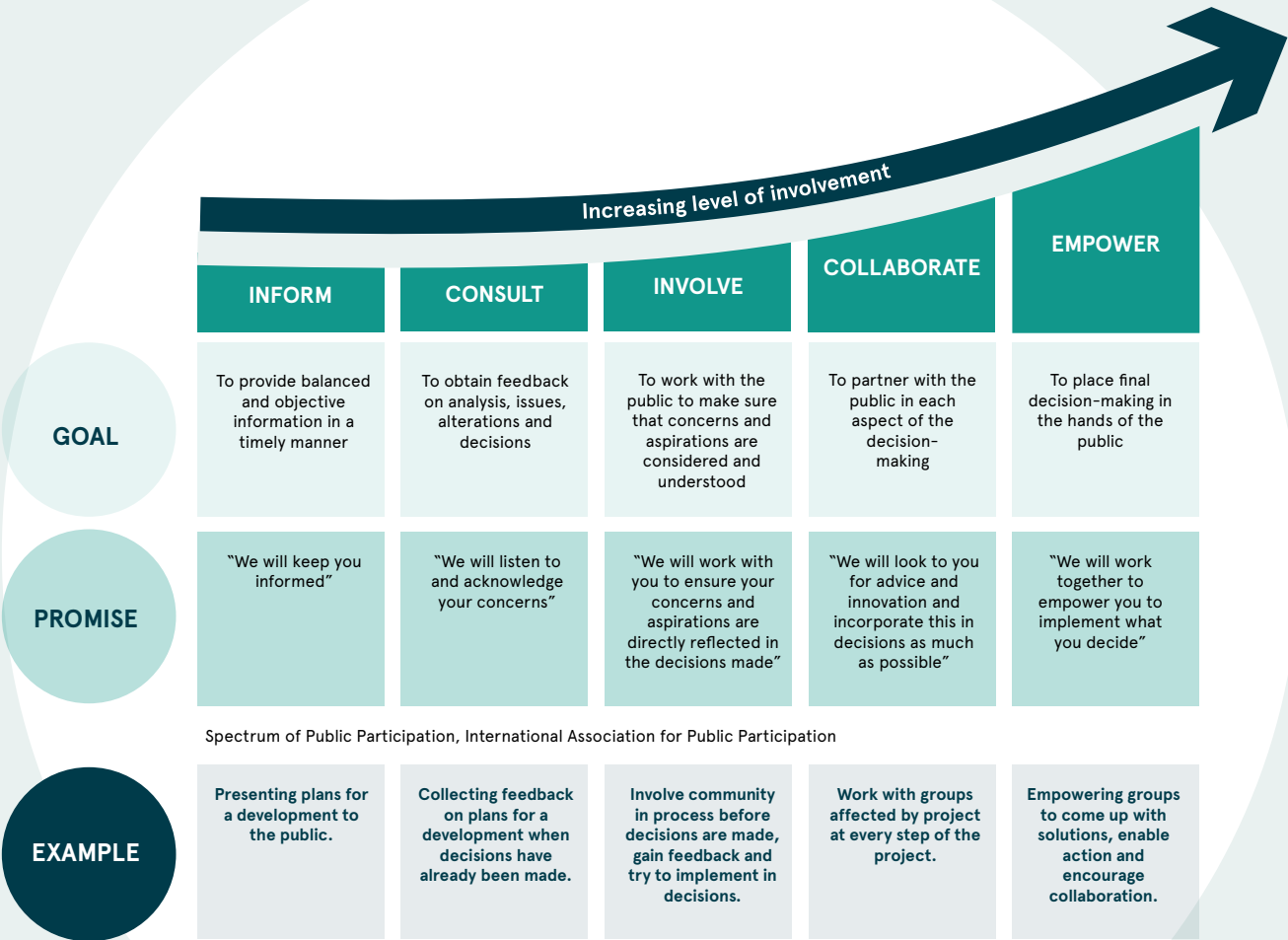
What does engagement look like?

IAP2 Engagement Spectrum helps define the role of a participant in engagement processes.

The spectrum identifies five levels of involvement, each with a corresponding goal and promise to the public. We have also included an 'example' for each level, which provides an example specific to CHOs of what this level could look like.

We aim to empower the community whenever we can, but empowering processes take time, energy, commitment, and trust. Depending on the circumstances, we may need to inform initially, then move towards consulting, involving, collaborating, and finally empowering the community.

The engagement tools and processes become more sophisticated and involved as we move towards the 'empowerment' end of the spectrum.



Best practice engagement process

1. Project planning

It is crucial to plan your engagement to gain the best outcomes possible.

This includes:

- Project team inception meeting
- Resourcing, including team, funding, time allocation (p. 26)

2. Place-based research

Knowing the local challenges, opportunities, and key stakeholders in the area will help you plan appropriate engagement processes.

This includes:

- Initial stakeholder conversations
- Information-gathering engagement
- Site visits
- Understanding engagement needs (pp. 27–29)
- Stakeholder mapping (pp. 35–37)

3. Develop engagement plan

An engagement plan provides clarity, direction and allows the details of the process to be mapped out.

This includes:

- Engagement planning (pp. 39–40)

4. Engage early, strategically, often

Ensuring your engage key stakeholders early provides time to build relationships, incorporate input and help people feel heard.

This includes:

- Preparing engagement agendas and run-sheets (pp. 41–45)

4. Alignment – build a project vision

A vision keeps project work aligned by working toward a common agreed-upon goal.

Depending on the scale of the project this could include:

- Multiple workshops with stakeholders to build a project vision
- A single workshop with key stakeholders to build a project vision
- Project team workshop to form a project vision

5. Co-design outcomes

Ideally, larger projects should have components of participation in design outputs by stakeholders.*

This could include:

- Lived experience consultation/input
- Workshop designs with group
- Form a reference panel from interested parties to consult throughout design process.

*It is important to be clear about the extent of input that participants can have.

6. Community updates

Provide clear updates to the community about the project status, plans and key engagement opportunities.

This could include:

- Messaging updates
- Presentation at community group/council meetings
- Poster updates at key community facilities.

7. Evaluate and improve

Reflecting on your engagement and assessing what could be improved will allow you to continue to grow your engagement skills.

This could include:

- Assessing measurement outcomes (pp.47–48)
- Reflecting on what went well and what could be improved
- Having a project team debrief and evaluation



Community Engagement Framework

03 Toolkit



Project planning

Setting engagement up for success

Commitment is one of the engagement principles. Ensuring there is sufficient resourcing, time, and budget for the engagement needed shows commitment from those in management/executive positions.

Providing clarity on how much scope and realistic budgets helps keep projects on track and the project team accountable.

The next pages walk through how to plan your engagement further. From how to write a simple engagement plan, to how to write an agenda and run-sheet, the tools will help you articulate and plan your engagement clearly.

Project team
01
02
03
04
05

Time allocation
Hours:
Hours:
Hours:
Hours:
Hours:
Total hours:

Budget
Allocated budget:
Additional funding:
Total budget:

Understanding engagement needs

How much engagement do I need?

This section is intended to get you thinking about the engagement requirements for your project and give you an indication of the required level of engagement your project will need.

This process prompts you to think of the place and environment that the project will sit within.

Instructions:

1. Fill out the questionnaire on the next page.
2. Take your questionnaire score and circle where it sits on the engagement complexity matrix.
3. Read through the best practice engagement practices on page 27–28 for an example of what engagement for your level of complexity could be.

Example:

Engagement questionnaire

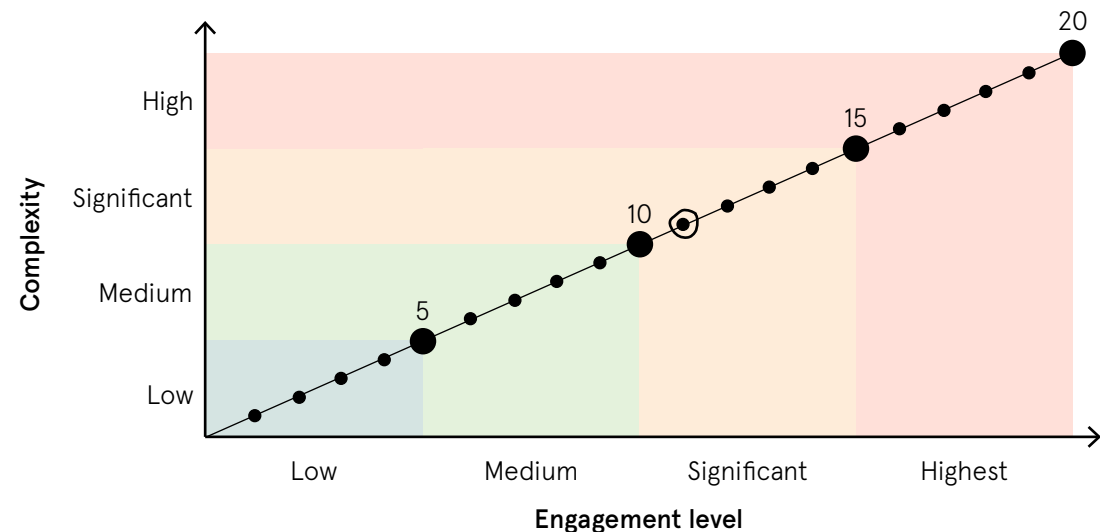
Questions	Points	Questions	Points	Questions	Points
1. Having connections within a community can help set your project up for success. Has your organisation got any connections to the local area?	Yes = 0 No = -1	4. Larger projects are more likely to receive community objections. How many dwellings does your project have?	1-2 = 0 3-5 = +1 <10 = -2 10+ = +3	8. Differences between the neighbourhood dominant dwelling type can cause resistance. What is the dominant dwelling type in the area?	Yes = 0 No = +2
2. Studies show that the higher the SEIFA index of the community, the more likely a project will receive objections. Using this map, is your project in an SA1 (council area) rated more than 1,000?	Yes = +1 No = 0	5. How many levels is the development? 1-2 stories 3-5 stories 5+ stories	= 0 = +1 = +2	Single houses Medium density High density	= +2 = +1 = 0
3. The following list are the highest SEIFA scoring suburbs in Victoria. Is your project in the following list of government areas? • Boroondara • Nillumbik • Stonnington • Melbourne • Bayside (Vic.) • Surf Coast • Yarra • Manningham • Port Phillip • Whitehorse • Glen Eira • Queenscliffe • Monash	Yes = +1 No = 0	6. A larger dwelling alongside smaller dwellings are more likely to cause neighbourhood objection. What is the difference in stories between your development and the neighbouring buildings? https://atlas.id.com.au Map selector>Housing>Dominant Dwelling Structure Or ABS Census data	0 = 0 1-2 = +1 2+ = +2	9. Is your project in an area where other dwellings managed by your organisation are? 10. Is there ample community amenity and services available? Such as parks, transport, support services, retail and community spaces? 11. Is there known or assumed problematic stakeholders?	Yes = 0 No = +2 Yes = 0 No = +2 Yes = 0 No = +1

Questionnaire final score:

11

Place on the matrix on the next page!

Engagement complexity matrix



Engagement questionnaire

Questions	Points
Having connections within a community can help set your project up for success. 1. Has your organisation got any partners in the local area within 400m?	Yes = 0 No = +1
Studies show that the higher the SEIFA index of the community, the more likely a project will receive objections. 2. Using this map, is your project in an SA1 (council area) of SEIFA Quintile 5 (highest 20%)?	Yes = +2 No = 0
Regional developments often face more objection than in cities. 3. Is your development in an area outside of Greater Melbourne?	Yes = +1 No = 0
4. Has there been recent community/media resistance to social housing in the area?	Yes = +1 No = 0
5. Is your project going to be using streamlined planning processes?	Yes = +1 No = 0

Questions	Points
Larger projects are more likely to receive community objections. 6. How many dwellings does your project have?	1-2 = 0 3-5 = +1 6-9 = +2 10+ = +3
How many levels is the development? 7. 1-2 stories 3-5 stories 5+ stories <i>1-2 = go to question 9</i>	= 0 = +1 = +2
A larger dwelling alongside smaller dwellings are more likely to cause neighbourhood objection. 8. What is the difference in storeys between your development and the neighbouring buildings?	0 = 0 1-2 = +1 2+ = +2
How does your development contribute to the surrounding community through public facilities or amenities: 9. 1. green space 2. meeting rooms 3. cafe/eatery 4. community use 5. play spaces	4+ = 0 1-3 = +1 nil = +2

Questions	Points
Differences between the neighbourhood dominant dwelling type can cause resistance. 10. What is the dominant dwelling type in the area?	Single houses = +2 Town houses = +1 Apartment complexes = 0
11. Is your project in an area where other dwellings are managed by your organisation?	Yes = 0 No = +2
Is there ample community amenity and services within 400m? Are there parks, public transport, support services, retail and community spaces? 12.	4+ = 0 1-3 = +1 nil = +2
13. Are there any stakeholders that are known, or assumed to be, opposed to new social housing developments in the area?	No = 0 Yes = +1

Questionnaire final score:

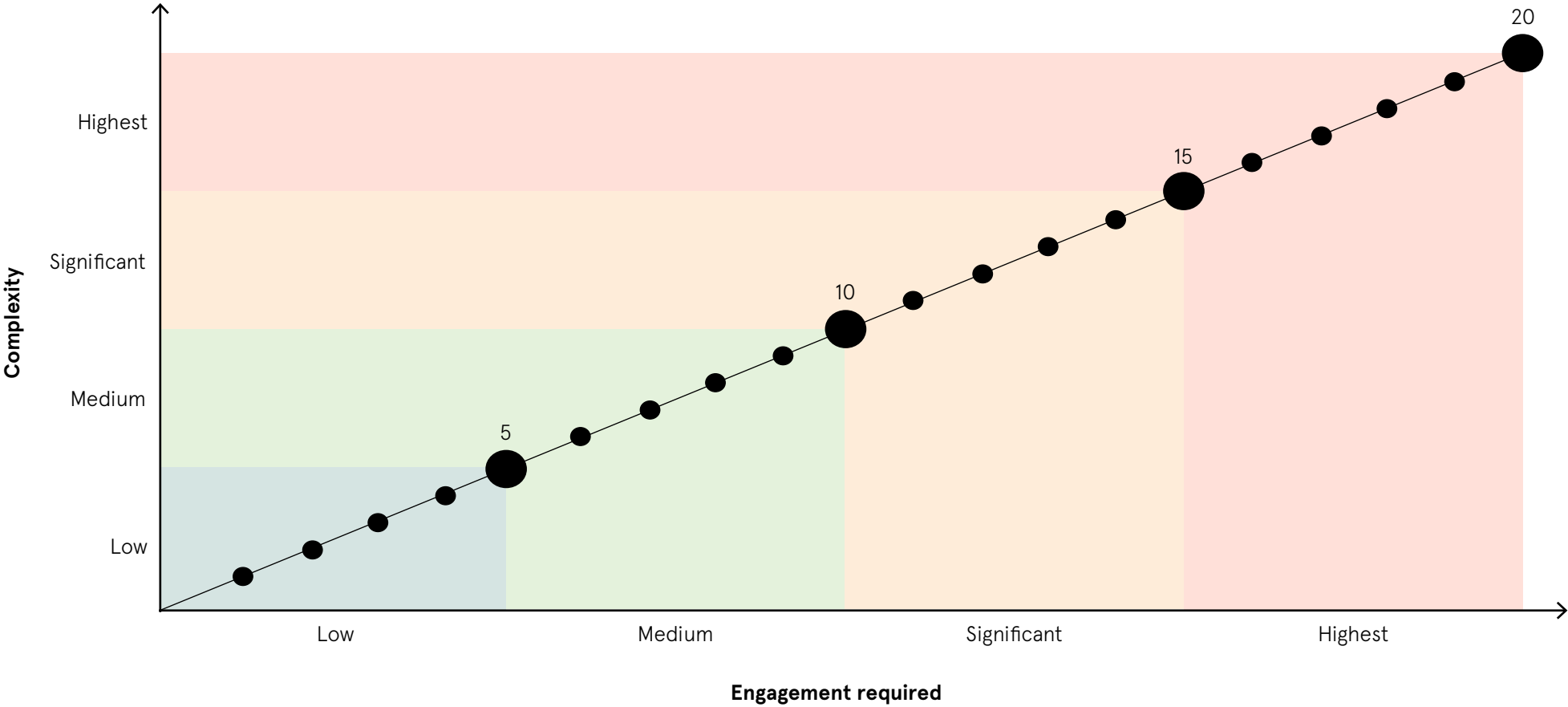
Place on the matrix on the next page!

Engagement complexity matrix

How much engagement do I need?

Circle your final score in the engagement questionnaire on the matrix below.

See page 44-48 for an example of what an engagement process could be for each level of complexity.



Stakeholder mapping

Knowing your stakeholders

It is critical to undertake a stakeholder mapping process at the beginning of your engagement process. This helps you understand the network of people who will be interested or invested in the outcomes of your project.

Asking council officers (especially those that look after partnerships), key service providers, traders, and community leaders can help with understanding who your key stakeholders are.

Rating your stakeholders from high to low priority can help you understand who needs to be engaged early and often.

Researching to understand the needs, wants, issues, and aspirations of key stakeholders is an important step in planning engagement types and needs.

The list to the right provides prompts of who your stakeholders could be. Depending on the complexity of your project, your stakeholder list may be short or comprehensive.

Once you have a stakeholder list, prioritise, and then use the next page to start mapping out your engagement for each stakeholder.

Residents:

- ☐ Existing renters
 - ☐ Neighbouring
 - ☐ Incoming residents
 - ☐ People with lived-experience
-
-

CHO internal staff:

- ☐ Executives
 - ☐ Project team
 - ☐ Client-facing team
 - ☐ Staff doing similar work
-
-

Community groups:

- ☐ Cultural groups
 - ☐ Sporting groups
 - ☐ Community groups
 - ☐ Gardening groups
 - ☐ Advocacy groups
-
-

Local support services:

- ☐ Educational and employment support
 - ☐ Health and wellbeing support
 - ☐ Financial and legal support
 - ☐ Specific cohort support (parents, CALD groups)
 - ☐ Disability support
 - ☐ Drug and alcohol support
-
-

Local businesses:

- ☐ Local hardware store
 - ☐ Local bakery
 - ☐ Local grocer or market
-
-

Local government:

- ☐ Councillors
 - ☐ Strategic planning officers
 - ☐ Statutory planning officers
-
-

State government:

- ☐ Homes Victoria
 - ☐ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
 - ☐ Department of Transport and Planning
 - ☐ Politicians
-
-

Local schools and educational institutions:

- ☐ Local primary schools
 - ☐ Local high schools
 - ☐ Universities / TAFE
-
-

Indigenous groups:

- ☐ Traditional owners
 - ☐ Local Elders
 - ☐ Local youth
-
-

Property and construction sector:

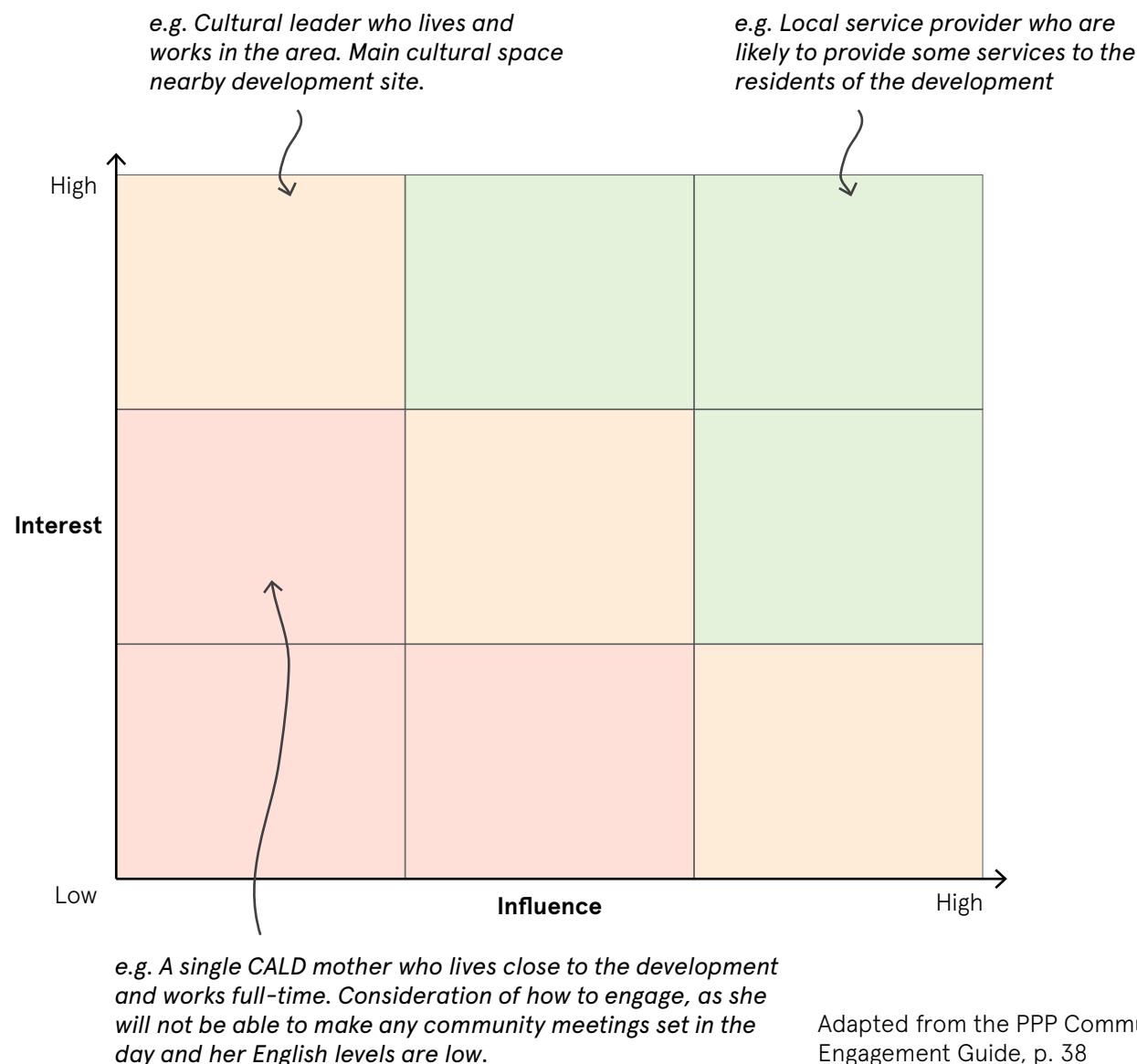
- ☐ Developers
 - ☐ Architects/designers
 - ☐ Industry body
-
-

Stakeholder matrix

How much engagement?

This matrix helps you gauge the amount of engagement your different stakeholders may need. Map out where they sit on this matrix which compares the amount of interest in the project they have, with the amount of influence they would have on the project.

These stakeholders will require high levels of engagement, with a variety of approaches that are suitable to work collaboratively. The aim is to involve these stakeholders in the process, and allow them to have direct input where possible.
These stakeholders will need a mid-level amount of engagement, with a variety of different engagement types. Engagement should be used to inform this cohort, with feedback and input incorporated where possible.
These stakeholders require updates about the project and it is important for them to have a chance to be heard. Engagement with this cohort is a chance to increase the education of Community Housing and why it will benefit the area. More community support in the area will make the development more likely to be supported.



Adapted from the PPP Community Engagement Guide, p. 38

Stakeholder engagement planning

Priority	Stakeholder	Engagement type	IAP2 level	Purpose
<i>E.g. - High</i>	<i>Lord mayor</i>	<i>Phone call</i>	<i>Inform/consult</i>	<i>To understand council aims in the area to align messaging around project impact</i>

Resource bank

Resource mapping

After mapping out your engagement needs, it is good to reflect on the resourcing you have allocated to ensure they align with the project engagement needs.

Understanding the resources you have at hand can help with engagement planning. Spending time to think about your team, partners, skill sets, gaps in skills, and materials can aid in understanding what needs to be attained to undertake the engagement planned.

For engagement with larger teams, a session where you map out individual strengths and weaknesses and how to best work together can be very useful in the process.

Sometimes the existing skill level and required skill level are too misaligned, and this may be where you consider getting specialist support.

Questions to ask

Do we have the skills to do the engagement required?

What other skills may we need?

Can we reach the people we need to with the resources we have allocated? If not, who do we talk to about the risk of inappropriately engaging?

People/support

Partners

Existing skills

Required skills

Materials we have

Materials we need

How to write a simple engagement plan

Why an engagement plan?

Engagement plans are often required by organisations, especially for medium to large-sized projects. It is a good habit to create an engagement plan as it can be used as a briefing document for anyone who needs to understand the scope of engagement, including internally within your CHO, local council, and Homes Victoria.

01 Project background

Provide overview of project background.

02 Key stakeholders

Include key stakeholder list to be included and targeted within engagement activities. (Refer to page 27)

03 Engagement catchment

Include a map with relevant boundary displayed showing 'catchment' in which you will focus engagement communication and promotions.

04 Engagement purpose

Clearly articulate the purpose of the engagement and area of influence that communities and stakeholders can have on the outcome.

05 Engagement tools

Clearly state techniques and tools that will be used in the engagement, e.g. online workshops, face to face interviews, focus groups etc. Consider cultural background, literacy and other factors that can become barriers to participation and choose tools that are accessible. (See page 32-35 for different engagement tools)

06 Engagement level

Review the IAP2 Spectrum (Page 18) and include the level of engagement (Refer to page 27) needed to guide the project.

07 Engagement implementation plan

List the stages of engagement, with each stage planned clearly using the following structure.

Stage: 01 – Early engagement

Stage purpose: Engage key stakeholders early to understand previous experience and gather feedback on their aspirations for...

Technique: 3 x small group workshops

1. Staff
2. Residents
3. Local stakeholders

IAP2 Level: Consult

Stakeholders: Staff, Residents, Council staff, adjacent landowners, local traders, community groups

Communications/promotions: Email invitations, A3 poster in residence, resident newsletter

Dates: 01/01/26-30/01/26

Reporting: Workshop notes will be prepared

08 Evaluation

Embed evaluation through the engagement to improve as you go. This may include surveys, project reflections, post project discussion and more. See page 42-43 for more information.

Engagement plan template

Project:		
Project background:		
Stage:		
Key stakeholders:		
Engagement purpose:		
Engagement catchment description: (Include map if required)		
Engagement techniques:		
Engagement level:		
Communications/promotions:		
Dates:		
Recording method:		
Evaluation method:		

Engagement types

Knowing your community

Responsive engagement

Every engagement project should be different for every project in response to your community and stakeholders.

The following engagement techniques (p. 31-34) identify common tools used for engagement, which can be combined to deliver an engagement process.

When choosing your engagement techniques consider:

What level of engagement are we doing (p. 18)?

Do we need to gather or share information?

Who are we engaging and how? (pp. 25-27)

Delivering appropriate engagement processes

Inclusive and appropriate engagement

Ensuring your engagement provides opportunities to engage with diverse groups is crucial to inclusive engagement.

It is important to understand that not all groups should be engaged in the same way, and that some communities may require more sensitive approaches to others.

Chapter three of Place-based approaches: A guide for the Victorian Public Service, [Working with diverse communities](#), by the Victorian Government (2023), provides useful insights into engaging with different groups, such as:

- First Nations communities,
- CALD communities,
- People with disability,
- Different age groups
- LGBTQ+ communities

High level engagement techniques needing specialist support

Sometimes certain tricky situations are called for specialist engagement support. Examples can involve politically sensitive or situations that involve conflict resolution or high level Placemaking specialist skills. Such situations include:

- NIMBY situation where there is an already organised and sophisticated anti-development group
- A minority group needing specialist and sensitive engagement skills.
- A design-led process that has lost the trust of the community that is in need of a 'Place and People' led process.
- The need for a skilled Facilitator to manage a complex large scale or political group process.

Why a "Town Hall" public meeting may not be the answer

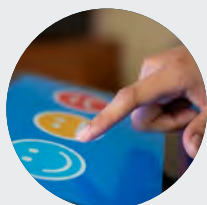
A "Town Hall" meeting is a community gathering where ideas are presented, followed by an open floor for questions and feedback.



Town Hall engagement sessions may be the first thing that comes to mind when the words 'community engagement' are mentioned. Whilst a Town Hall-style engagement session has its place, there are many other forms of engagement that may be more beneficial to the outcomes of your project.

Town Hall sessions often are attended by a similar cohort of the community, and the loudest voice in the room can overwhelm others. If a Town Hall session is mandatory, a skilled facilitator with experience in this format should be used.

Lower effort engagement types



Polls

Online or in-person simple vote on a simple topic.

When: Pre-design

IAP2 Spectrum: Consult

Pros: Efficient means of collecting data from a large number of residents in a relatively short period.

Cons: Limited depth of information, and potential for limited participation. Additionally, question design impacts results significantly.

Tips: Craft neutral and clear questions, and diversify question types.



Email updates

Sending an email to a subscribed list of recipients with updates on project progress.

When: Design and planning, construction

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform

Pros: Cost-effective and efficient communication that can reach a wide audience.

Cons: There is potential for information to be overlooked by the recipient, and emails generally have a lack of visual impact.

Tips: Use visual elements and encourage two-way communication.



Physical display

A poster or board that displays project information at a certain location.

When: Pre-design

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult.

Pros: Visual communication and interactive engagement is positive.

Cons: Limited interactivity compared to digital alternatives, and it has a limited reach as well as time constraints.

Tips: Create visually engaging content, and incorporate interactive elements where possible.



Phone interviews

A phone conversation where key stakeholders are asked questions.

When: Research phase, before any decisions are made.

IAP2 Spectrum: Consult/involve.

Pros: An effective way to gain a comprehensive understanding of community aspirations and challenges, reaching individuals who may be difficult to connect with in person.

Cons: Hard to build relationships over the phone.

Tips: Ensure you have some prepared questions. You could send through questions before the interview.



Kitchen table conversations

A casual face-to-face discussion with an individual or a small group.

When: Research phase, before any decisions are made.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult/involve.

Pros: An effective method to gain insight into the community's aspirations and challenges.

Cons: Takes time to visit on site

Tips: Ensure you have some prepared questions. You could send through questions beforehand.



Site walks

A site visit with key stakeholders to get insights into the local context, issues, aspirations.

When: Research phase.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult/involve.

Pros: Provides an understanding of challenges and risks while fostering relationships and connections.

Cons: Not suitable for large groups.

Tips: Try to keep the conversation constructive and include people who know the area well.

Medium effort engagement types



Survey (in-person or online)

A questionnaire, conducted either digitally or in person, comprising a predetermined set of questions.

When: Research phase.

IAP2 Spectrum: Consult/involve.

Pros: Excellent method to reach a large audience.

Cons: Challenging to encourage participation. Requires a level of data analysis.



Door knocking

Visiting neighbouring residences and businesses to inform them about the development by personally engaging with them.

When: Early stages.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform.

Pros: Shares information on subject with those that will be impacted most, and develops relationships. Can be great to do with local businesses.

Cons: Can be seen as invading privacy. Resistance is to be expected. Person conducting engagement needs good people skills.



Flyer drops

Posting brochures into local mailboxes to inform about development.

When: Early.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform.

Pros: Effectively shares information in the local area, reaching a wide audience and clearly articulating the process.

Cons: Can seem transactional if only technique used and printing can be expensive.



Media release

Using standard media such as newspapers and newsletters to provide project information and updates.

When: Design and planning, construction, post-construction.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform.

Pros: Media outlets have a wide reach, and are often viewed as credible and trustworthy.

Cons: Potential for misinterpretation, limited interactivity (one-way communication), and limited engagement depth.



Website

A website is a formal way to provide project updates and information.

When: Design and planning, construction, post-construction.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform.

Pros: Often the first thing people will visit to get information.

Cons: Requires significant effort to design, and needs maintenance.



Social media updates

Using social media to provide project updates and provide an easy platform for people to interact and ask questions.

When: Design and planning, construction, post-construction

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult.

Pros: Can be engaging and reach a wide audience. Accessible to a lot of people. Reaches different audiences than standard.

Cons: Takes time and commitment to create engaging content.

Significant effort engagement types



Webinar

A virtual session where information is presented, and feedback is collected online.

When: Research phase and refining stage.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult/involve.

Pros: Reaches people that may not be available in person, and can capture a lot of information.

Cons: Can be hard to manage and develop relationships.



Pop-up activities

A process of collecting and sharing information that takes place at an event or community hub.

When: Research phase, before any decisions are made, or refining stage to test ideas.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult/involve.

Pros: An effective method to grasp aspirations and challenges while enhancing public awareness.

Cons: Requires significant coordination and organisation, and might reach one specific group more than others.

Tips: Include fun, engaging activities to gather quantifiable information. Food is a great way to get people to engage.



Visioning workshops

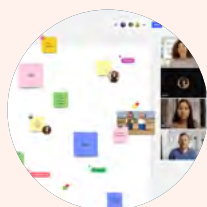
A long session where a group workshops ideas and solutions.

When: Research phase, or refining stage.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult/involve/collaborate.

Pros: An effective method to gather diverse input and foster connections, cultivating relationships within the room.

Cons: High effort to organise, and in-person attendance often lower



Web whiteboard

A virtual collaborative platform accessible through a web browser, which provides tools for real-time communication and collaboration.

When: Pre-design.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult/involve.

Pros: Virtual, so allows for collaboration regardless of geographical distances, reaching a wider and more diverse audience.

Cons: Digital fatigue - maintaining participant engagement is more challenging when engagement is done virtually.



Alignment/brainstorming workshops

Creative, open dialogue which aims to explore diverse viewpoints to inform decision-making.

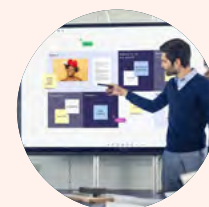
When: Pre-design.

IAP2 Spectrum: Consult/involve/collaborate.

Pros: Diverse idea generation and collaborative problem solving

Cons: Potential for dominant voices to monopolise, and may be challenging to achieve full representation from all segments of the community.

Tips: Diverse participant selection, and encourage open communication.



Interactive displays

Visual and interactive tools or exhibits designed to inform, engage, and solicit input from community members

When: Pre-design.

IAP2 Spectrum: Inform/consult/involve.

Pros: The participatory approach makes people more engaged and involved, and the immediacy of feedback is beneficial.

Cons: Overreliance on technology. Some demographics might be uncomfortable using interactive displays.

High effort engagement types



Focus/reference groups

A core group of key stakeholders that are engaged regularly throughout the project's development.

When: Research phase.

IAP2 Spectrum: Involve/collaborate/empower.

Pros: Provides understanding of challenges and risks.

Cons: Time consuming, requires substantial coordination and planning, and group members can feel over-engaged.



Community active participation

Involvement and contribution of community members in decision-making processes, planning, and implementation.

When: Pre-design, design and planning, construction.

IAP2 Spectrum: Involve/collaborate/empower.

Pros: Provides a better understanding of community needs, and identifies issues at an early stage.

Cons: There are likely to be differing opinions and conflicts, and balancing diverse perspectives can be challenging.



Citizen panel

Community members selected to actively engage in decision-making processes, ensuring the community have a direct role in shaping design outcomes.

When: Pre-design, design and planning.

IAP2 Spectrum: Involve/collaborate/empower.

Pros: Fosters community trust and acceptance, enhancing public relations and providing community-centred solutions.

Cons: Time consuming, and not necessarily representative of the entire community.



Conferences

A formal meeting where community members, housing providers, government officials, and other stakeholders discuss and share information.

When: Research phase.

IAP2 Spectrum: Involve/collaborate/empower.

Pros: Provides understanding of challenges and risks.

Cons: Time consuming, requires substantial coordination and planning, and group members can feel over-engaged.



Co-design process

Involves active participation from community members, industry professionals, and other stakeholders in the design and decision-making processes.

When: Pre-design, design and planning.

IAP2 Spectrum: Involve/collaborate/empower.

Pros: Informed decision making – housing solutions that better align with the needs of the residents.

Cons: Time consuming and complex decision making process. Balancing professional expertise and community preferences can be challenging.



Round table conversations

Also called World Cafe, this is where participants work together to try and solve an identified issue.

When: Pre-design, design and planning.

IAP2 Spectrum: Involve/collaborate/empower.

Pros: Provides an opportunity to address conflicts or disagreements in a constructive manner – can lead to resolutions and compromises that benefit all parties.

Cons: Time consuming process, and conversations may not always lead to clear consensus on certain issues.

Engagement agenda

Why is it important to plan?

Preparing an agenda is an essential process in engagement as it is a key method of outlining your plans and intentions for the session with participants. This is where you can be transparent about the purpose, level of involvement, expected outcomes, and processes of the engagement.

The agenda is an outward-facing document that you can send to participants before the engagement date.

1.

Use the prompts on the right to formulate the description of the engagement

2.

Then provide a table of timing and content like the example on the next page.

01 Project name

Include your overall project name

Example: New Community Housing in Evergreen.

02 Project stage

If your project has stages, include where you are up to in the development process.

Example: Stage 01: planning

03 Engagement type – agenda

Indicate that this is an agenda for your engagement type.

Example: Co-design visioning workshop – agenda

04 Date, time and location

Include planned date, time and location, including any additional information on how to access the venue.

Example: 24th February 2023, 11:00am–12:30am, 123 Rainbow Drive, Sunshine. Come through the side door located on Smithy Road. Parking behind building.

05 Facilitators and presenters

Identify who will be facilitating and presenting on the day.

Example: Nancy Smith, XYZ – Facilitator

Samuel Morgan, WILFreD executive – presenter

Idrees Beefram, XYZ project director – presenter

06 Purpose

Clearly identify the purpose of this engagement.

Example: To brainstorm aspirations and visions for this project to inform the overall project vision.

07 Outcomes

Identify what the outcomes of the session will be.

Example: A collection of aspirations from each participant that will be collated and help inform the project vision.

Gather insight into the challenges that could be faced in the area.

08 Timing and content

Identify the activities and timing of the engagement for transparency and clarity.

Example: See next page.

Engagement agenda example

Time	Description	Presenter/facilitator
11:00	Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country, and introductions	Nancy Smith Acknowledgement of Country: Samuel Morgan
11:05	Agenda, purpose and group agreements	Nancy Smith
11:10	Project background and research findings	Idrees Beefram
11:40	Activity 01: Aspirations	Nancy Smith
11:50	Activity 02: Stakeholder mapping	Nancy Smith
12:10	Activity 03: Group design review	Nancy Smith
12:25	Thank you and next steps	Samuel Morgan
12:30	Finish	Nancy Smith

Agenda template

01 Project name

02 Project stage

03 Engagement type – agenda

04 Date, time and location

05 Facilitators and presenters

06 Purpose

07 Outcomes

Time	Description	Presenter/facilitator

Run-sheet example

Being prepared and aligned

Developing a run sheet for an upcoming engagement session can help the project team understand what is expected of them and when.

This sheet can be used by everyone during the session as a reference to help keep the session on track. While a run sheet can be comprehensive, engagement needs to be flexible and adaptable. When deviating from the agenda, it is best to be transparent and seek consensus from the group if changes are desired.

If you are having others present information, it is good to do a practice run or provide specifics on how much time they have and how much they should share.

Tips and tricks

- For any timed engagements, leave at least five minutes for people to arrive and settle.
- 15-20 minutes is the most time people can on a topic focus for.
- Movement and engaging activities can make a workshop a lot more engaging.
- Anything over two hours a break should be considered.

Time		Description	Notes
10:30-10:50	20 mins	Project team arrival and set up	• Set up tables in semi-circle • 4 chairs per table • Nancy to lay out stationary • Connect to projector • Set out blank name badges and textas
10:50-11:00	10 mins	Early welcomes	• Everyone prompt participants to write own name badge
11:00-11:10	5-10 mins	Start session	• Nancy to invite people to take a seat
11:10-11:20	10 mins	Welcome Acknowledgement of Country Introductions	• Nancy welcome and hand over to Samer • Samer welcome on behalf of project team, introduce members, share acknowledgement and hand back to Nancy • Nancy gets group to introduce themselves with fun icebreaker
11:20-11:27	7 mins	Project background	• Nancy hand over to Indrees for project background
11:27-11:34	7 mins	Research findings	• Indrees quick summary
11:34-11:40	6 mins	Questions	• Open up for questions • Indrees hands back to Nancy
11:40-11:50	10 mins	Activity 01: Aspirations	• Participants write on paper in front of them • Salt and pepper sharing from group
11:50-12:05	15 mins	Activity 02: Stakeholder mapping	• Small groups map important stakeholders • Group come back together to collate as a whole • Participants asked to rank importance with 3 dot votes
12:05-12:25	20 mins	Activity 03: Group design review	• Indrees walk through new plans • Group comments captured on sticky notes by Nancy
12:25-12:30	5 mins	Thank you and next steps	• Nancy hands over to Indrees for next steps and Samer for thank you
12:30		Finish and pack down	• All workshop input collected by Nancy • Room returned to as it was

Run-sheet template

- 01 Project name
- 02 Project stage
- 03 Engagement type – agenda
- 04 Date, time and location
- 05 Facilitators and presenters
- 06 Purpose
- 07 Outcomes

Time	Duration	Description	Notes

Tips: the art of holding space

To effectively hold a space during community engagement, it's crucial to establish purpose and set clear intentions. Aspire to ensure every voice is heard, and to foster a safe and creative environment to unlock collective wisdom.

How the room is set up during engagement significantly influences participation. Optimal outcomes are achieved by arranging the room in a circle, ensuring visibility and eye contact for everyone. A horseshoe or semi-circle shape is also highly effective.

Beginning with a meaningful acknowledgement of Country and a warm welcome sets a positive tone for the entire session. If appropriate, someone from the group may also participate in the welcome and acknowledgement.

Simple and targeted ice breakers are highly effective and can create a welcoming environment. For instance, starting by asking people their names, where they are from, and about their aspirations for the workshop fosters connections and provides insights into their needs and priorities.

Before engagement, brief key allies to gain their support. Meeting leaders and influential figures beforehand is impactful; brief them and empower their voices. This is also a gesture of respect.



Image 8: Burnham Beeches engagement session

Gathering an evidence base

Gathering evidence

In some circumstances, planning requirements will include a consultation report that outlines findings and demonstrates responses to community feedback.

This means that when undertaking engagement, records of findings have to be taken, kept, and analysed. This can be achieved through various methods depending on the types of engagement.

Communities can experience engagement fatigue when they are repeatedly asked the same questions. This can lead to annoyance and a loss of trust in the process.

Ensuring that you have spent time understanding any previous engagement and its outcomes is crucial. Keeping a record of your processes ensures that any further engagement can build on the progress and understanding you have made.

Helping stakeholders understand the context of their engagement makes them more open to the process and sharing their views.

Method 01

Spoken summary notes

When having a conversation with someone, it is important to capture what is said. Keep raw note records of conversations in a file to act as both a prompt for your consultation summary and for someone else to understand what has been discussed if they are brought onto the job.

In workshop settings, this technique is often used to capture quotes and more detailed information to enhance the written data gathered.



Method 02

Information gathering activities

In engagement sessions, ways of capturing data can be built into the process. This could include techniques such as:

- Voting on preferences
- Writing down thoughts
- Drawing aspirations
- Surveys

This data can then be used to give your consultation report an evidence base.

Comments analysis

Gathering comments/thoughts from participants and analysing to understand key themes and concerns is a way to capture the sentiments of the room. This can be quite a simple process for a small workshop, or include significant data analysis if a large job. Larger jobs could need aid from a specialist.

Impact measurement

Evaluation is a valuable tool for continually enhancing engagement skills. Even in small projects, dedicating time to reflect and evaluate can contribute to improvement in future endeavours.

For smaller projects, this could involve scheduling 15–30 minutes with a colleague to discuss successes and areas for improvement.

In larger projects, a more structured approach is advisable. Developing a measurement plan before engagement allows for the integration of measures, facilitating easier tracking and evaluation. This plan can be applied across multiple similar activities to assess the success of engagement across various stakeholder groups.

Example:

We are hosting three of the same workshops with a different stakeholder group each time. At the end of the session we asked participants to fill out slip of paper that looked like this:

"Circle how you felt in this workshop

<i>Good</i>	<i>Alright</i>	<i>Not great</i>
<i>Did you feel like your input was heard and valued?</i>		
<i>Yes</i>	<i>Sort of</i>	<i>Not really</i>
<i>Any additional feedback?"</i>		

We found that the first two workshops were received quite well, but in the third the stakeholders didn't feel as heard. Some feedback captured showed that there was one really loud person in the room that was dismissive of others.

Your team brainstormed and sent out an additional survey to the groups to capture anything that wasn't able to be shared. The next time you ran a workshop, you asked everyone to write their thoughts down so you captured everyone's input, and built in times in small groups to make sure everyone had some time to discuss with others.

Techniques to track could include:

- Discussing with team member
- Number of participants
- Number of sausages given out
- Simple engagement activities, such as voting jars or dot-mocracy
- Surveys (in-person, on-line)
- Asking participants for feedback

Activity	Objective	Measure	Technique	Timing	Tracking
Activity at end of workshop	Capture how engagement went	How did you feel about this workshop? Did you feel heard? + any feedback?	Anonymous paper slip survey	After workshop	Compare to previous workshops
Pop-up information session	Understand how effective this is in different community settings	How many people came	Counter	At every pop-up year 2024	Compare a against other pop-ups

Best practice example engagement methods by stage and scale

What could a best practice engagement process look like?

The following pages are provided as examples of what an engagement process may look like for different scales of complexity.

Each page describes a stage in the delivery of a new Community Housing development. Each stage is further broken into the level of engagement that could be undertaken for different levels of project complexity. A tool for starting to identify the complexity of your project is on pages 33–35.

These following processes are provided as examples only, and should only be used for reference. Consulting with relevant authorities will provide a better understanding of the needs of your individual project. The tools provided throughout this framework will help you establish your own place-based engagement process.

The five stages of development are:

1. Before design
2. Design development
3. Planning review
4. Post approval and construction
5. Post construction

Low complexity (1–4 points)

Example: 2 dwellings in a suburban setting, 1-storey each.

For smaller, low complex developments, traditional planning pathways will probably be used. It is important to engage with the surrounding neighbours as they will be the most affected by the project. Having a few understanding neighbours could increase support for the renters from their local community.

Medium complexity (5–9 points)

Example: 10 dwelling development, low-rise, in high SEIFA suburb..

For a medium-sized development a higher level of engagement is needed. Early engagement of neighbours is important to ensure larger community resistance is not sparked. Engaging key members of council that will support the development will help with gaining support.

Significant complexity (10–14 points)

Example: 40 dwellings in a 4 storey building with community use on ground floor.

For larger developments, planned and effective engagement is required as there is a higher chance of receiving community resistance. Engaging with a variety of stakeholders in appropriate ways and involving community in decisions where possible will grow support. Engaging councillors and key council groups will help increase support and they can increase your knowledge of the area.

Highest complexity (15+ points)

Example: 150 apartments in an area new to the CHO, lack of amenity and services in immediate area.

For large projects, early and strategic engagement of the surrounding community and stakeholders needs to be conducted to ensure project support. Council engagement and support will be crucial. Engagement can also be used to scope potential partners and support for the development.

Before design

The stage before design is commenced is a chance to gather information from the community that can inform your design brief. It is also a chance to start building relationships and trust. It is crucial to have clear messaging and engagement opportunities.

Low complexity | Score 1-4

1. Meeting with project team to scope out and assign engagement processes and responsibilities.
2. Meeting with the council to discuss project intentions.
3. Conversation with partnerships coordinator to understand services and connections in the area.
4. Flyer drop to neighbouring buildings, with invitation for a phone call or kitchen table conversation.
5. Display sign on each street frontage with intention for site, with option to contact.

Medium complexity | Score 5-9 (Inclusive of Low complexity steps)

Steps 1-5 and:

6. Door knocking for immediate residents doors. Can be a positive process to humanise the project and provide options for conversations.
7. Pop-up/posters for local residents showing how it will be done sensitively and articulate any community benefit to the area. Advertise community drop-in session (in design stage).

Significant complexity | Score 10-14 (Inclusive of Low and Medium complexity steps)

Steps 1-7 and:

8. Prepare engagement and communication plans and workshop with Homes Victoria (recommended for developments of 30+).
9. Workshop with Municipal council officers and councillors to share project background and aspirations, increase understanding of local issues, map key stakeholders and local policies.
10. Conversation with infrastructure and services providers to cover project scope and understand challenges.
11. Connect with local Indigenous group and Elders to gain advice on how to proceed.
12. a) Letter drop within 150m of site with a description of the proposal and clear explanation of engagement opportunities.
13. Provide signage on fencing and in local community centres with project and engagement details.
14. a) 1 x community pop-up sessions to gather information on aspirations and challenges for the site. If any community infrastructure is to be included, use this session to get an idea of what is desired by community.
15. a) 1x Visioning workshop with project team and key council representatives to workshop how to best support development in becoming a part of the community. Confirm vision with CHO executives for sign off.
16. Launch a community information and feedback website.

Highest complexity | Score 15+ (Inclusive of Low, Medium and Significant complexity steps)

Steps 1-11, 13, 16 and:

12. b) Letter drop within 300m of site with a description of the proposal and clear explanation of engagement opportunities.
14. b) 3 x community pop-up sessions across different dates and at different events to gather information on aspirations and challenges for the site. If any community infrastructure is to be included, use this session to get an idea of what is desired by community.
15. b) 3 x visioning workshop with key stakeholders and council representatives to workshop how to best support development in becoming a part of the community. Confirm vision with CHO executives for sign off.
17. Build a reference group from a diverse group of key stakeholders to continue to consult through design process.

Design stages

Whilst the design of a building is being determined, there are stages in which the design can be tested by community engagement. This ensures the end result is not a surprise to the community, and provides a chance for feedback.

Low complexity | Score 1-4

1. Meeting with council and service/infrastructure providers to discuss and refine design.
2. a) Display sign on each street frontage with intention for site, with option to contact
3. a) A simple conversation with a lived experience representative to ensure design is responding to user needs.

Medium complexity | Score 5-9 (Inclusive of Low complexity steps)

- 1, 2a) and:
2. b) include details of community drop-in session on sign.
3. b) Co-design workshop with staff and lived experience representatives.
4. a) Host a community pop-up engagement session to refine design, build community buy-in, create allies and reduce community concern.

Significant complexity | Score 10-14 (Inclusive of Low and Medium complexity steps)

Steps 1-4a) and:

4. b) Run one in-person workshops and one digital workshops to provide chance for community to provide feedback.
5. Stay engaged with council and service providers to ensure requirements are being met.
6. Phone call with key community members that may not otherwise engage.
7. Host a key stakeholder workshop to ensure designs are achieving the project vision.
8. Update community website to showcase design and how you have implemented community feedback.
9. Host a final engagement session to share design results and answer any questions or concerns.

(Inclusive of Low, Medium and Significant complexity steps)

Steps 1-9 and:

4. c) Host two community workshops, 1 pop-up, and one digital workshops to refine design, build community buy-in, create allies and reduce community concern.
10. At each stage of design development, consult reference group to refine design.
11. Conduct kitchen-table engagement with key community members who may not partake in other engagement types.
12. Present designs to council and councillors.

Planning review

Whilst the finalised design is evaluated through the planning system, there are still engagement opportunities. As this stage can take a long period of time, it is important to keep the community updated. It is also an opportunity to plan and build relationships for the support of the residents of the building.

Low Complexity | Score 1-4

1. Keep surrounding community updated with design through emails, posters and online posts.
2. Addressed letter drop with development plans and details to neighbouring owners and occupiers within 150m of site with option to discuss/provide feedback (three weeks).
3. Provide access to technical documents for interested parties.

Medium complexity | Score 5-9 (Inclusive of Low complexity steps)

Steps 1-3 and:

4. Lived experience plan review.
5. Meeting with council and service/infrastructure providers to review plans.

Significant complexity | Score 10-14 (Inclusive of Low and Medium complexity steps)

Steps 1-5 and:

6. Have an online commenting option open for feedback open for at least three weeks (excluding holidays).
7. Develop a consultation report.
8. Facilitate workshops with representatives from council, infrastructure and services, and design and development team to respond to consultation outcomes.
9. Update report to cover responses to consultation.
10. Provide update to community and stakeholders on changes.
11. Provide information to support Councils to inform the community and provide information on the progress of the project.
12. a) Resource staff member to be on-site for the first two months whilst renters move in.

(Inclusive of Low, Medium and Significant complexity steps)

Steps 1-11 and:

12. b) Resource staff member to be on-site for the first four months whilst renters move in.
13. Facilitate reference panel to help develop a community plan to support renters.
14. Coordinate with council, businesses and local services for support to implement plan.

Post approval/construction

Once a building has been approved, construction can begin. As construction can be disruptive, it is important to keep the community up-to-date with plans and expected completion dates. It is also time to continue building partnerships in the area.

Low complexity | Score 1-4

1. Provide construction updates to neighbouring residents.
2. Meeting with council to map out next steps or close loop.
3. Introduce renters to relevant local services and/or community groups.

Medium complexity | Score 5-9 (Inclusive of Low complexity steps)

Steps 1-3 and:

4. Conversation with partnerships coordinator to understand services and connections in the area that could support residents.
5. Provide construction updates on local community notice boards.

Significant complexity | Score 10-14 (Inclusive of Low and Medium complexity steps)

Steps 1-5 and:

6. Plan process to understand challenges and pursue opportunities to help residents with
7. Plan engagement events to build community within housing.
8. Plan ongoing renter engagement, such as surveys, discussions, kitchen table chats.
9. Plan and resource the establishment of a resident community building group to help run community activities.
10. Continue to engage council to help manage any issues that arise.
11. Facilitate the formation of a community activity planning group/fund.
12. Review engagement processes and see where improvements could be made.

Highest complexity | Score 15+ (Inclusive of Low, Medium and Significant complexity steps)

Steps 1-12 and:

13. Plan an open day with key stakeholders to thank them for their input and continue relationships.
14. Resource any training required for staff that will be engaging residents on site.

Community Engagement Framework

04 Case studies



Burnham Beeches, Sherbrooke, VIC

Village Well was engaged to undertake community engagement and placemaking processes at Burnham Beeches. The community had already objected to a previous plan for the historic site, and were quick to mobilise if they did not like what was planned.

Engagement techniques

- Facilitated kitchen table conversations to understand and address the core concerns of community members.
- Conducted small group workshops involving key community action groups to allow for open discussion of critical issues and explore potential solutions.
- Utilised online surveys to gather input from a broader cross-section of the community, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives were considered.
- Organised a community open day at the site of the future development which included an Indigenous Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony, acknowledging and respecting the cultural heritage of the area.

Challenges

- Due to previous owner behaviours and attitudes, the community were against development on this site.
- Significant engagement efforts were needed to start to build trust again.

What went well?

- Through implementing place-based, unique engagement, we were able to unite a previously divided community that held anti-development sentiments.
- Through doing informed engagement, we made sure to effectively address community concerns, showcasing a commitment to understanding and mitigating challenges.
- We achieved community support by articulating the project's holistic benefits, covering community development, cultural preservation, ecological sustainability, and economic prosperity.
- Collaboration fostered a positive project perception by actively involving the community in decision-making and addressing their concerns.
- The engagement process established a foundation for sustained collaboration, trust, and community ownership, ensuring project sustainability.

Improvements

- The owner originally did not see community engagement as a priority, and therefore it started later than it could have.
- There was not enough time given to build strong relationships with the community.
- There was a missed opportunity to partner with community further, as there was a desire from the community to be involved on site.



Image 10: Smoking ceremony at Burnham Beeches engagement

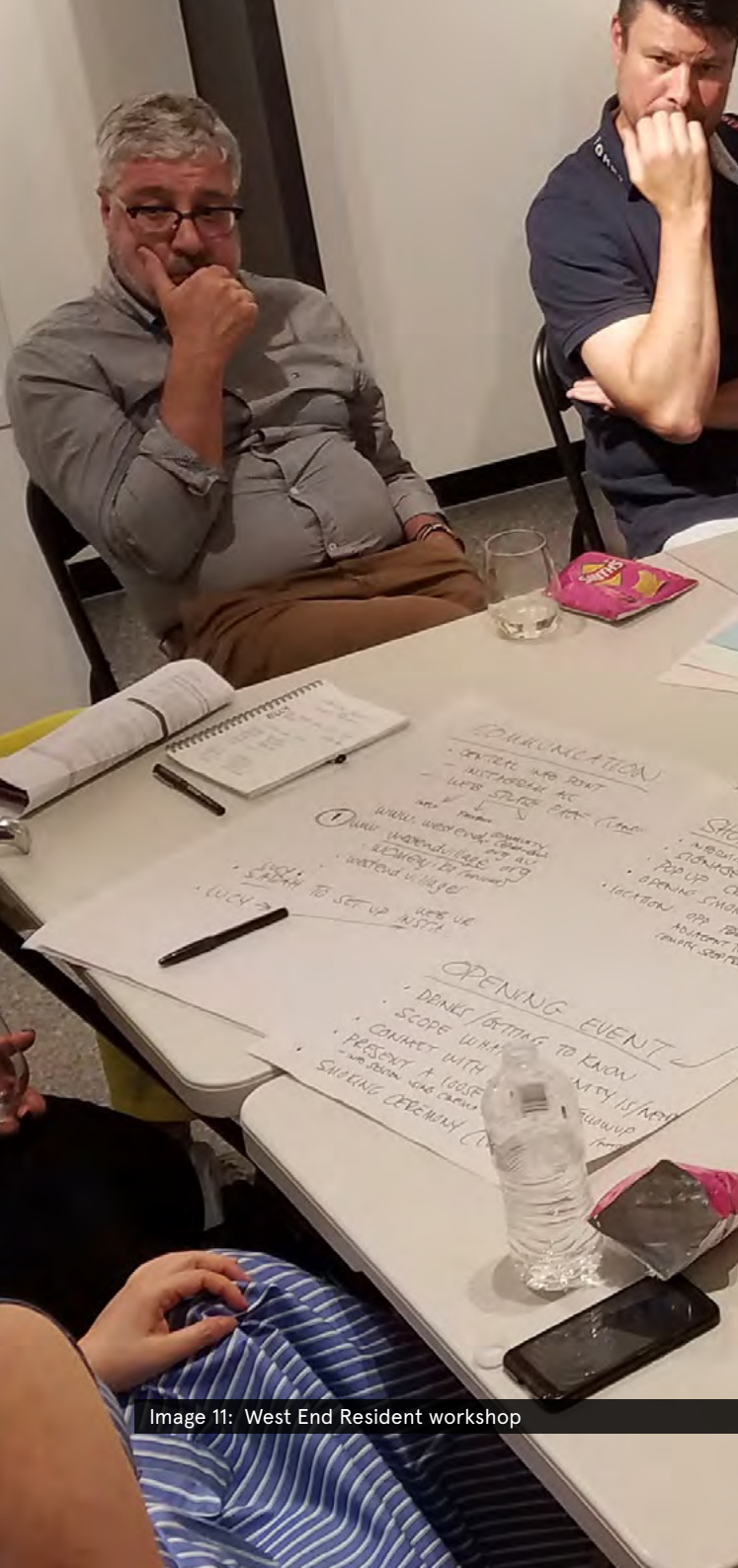


Image 11: West End Resident workshop

West End, West Melbourne, VIC

Village Well was engaged to create and facilitate a place vision and activation plan, which was to be owned and delivered by residents in the West End development of Melbourne.

Engagement techniques

- Client meetings to discuss scope and possibilities for resident involvement.
- Multiple resident workshops where residents identified distinct key areas for activation and formed separate working groups for effective implementation of key ideas.
- The developer provided seed funding and City of Melbourne supplemented by grants to kick-start community-driven ideas.

Challenges

- There was limited communication between the residents within themselves, as well as with the developer.
- Residents were not getting clear information which left them feeling frustrated.
- The developer had an operational model of a body corporate, which resulted in a pattern of power over, not power with.

What went well?

- The community bonded through this process, becoming empowered and unified through collaborative efforts in shaping and activating their living spaces.
- Engagement improved communication and collaboration among tenants, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility.
- The process achieved cost savings through volunteer actions in programming public spaces, resulting in increased safety and a stronger sense of place for residents.

Improvements

- A better engagement process would have included starting earlier with tenants.
- Scope to have ongoing engagement would have strengthened the process and made the residents feel supported.
- There was no opportunity built into the engagement for ongoing evaluation. Revisiting the group every six months could have been beneficial to keep momentum up.

Transition towns and cities, City of Banyule, VIC

Village Well organised a full-day workshop to empower the community in revitalising, greening, and building resilience in Banyule.

Engagement techniques

- The workshop involved inspiring talks, mini workshops, and group processes to engage and motivate participants during the workshop.
- The community presented ideas and formed sub-working groups, contributing to the generation of innovative solutions.

What went well?

- The initiative was driven and created by the community itself, ensuring active involvement and ownership in the process.
- Delivered key actions through mobile community projects, enhancing community well-being and securing funding for future initiatives.



Image 12: Transition town workshop

New Epping, Melbourne VIC

Village Well was engaged to engage stakeholders and develop a place vision and community building strategy for 151 new apartments in a brownfield site. This project was used as a pilot to then build a placemaking framework for the organisation.

Engagement techniques

- Worked closely with project team for alignment and increased education and capacity.
- Visited the site and local services.
- Engaged key staff to understand tenant needs.
- Ran vision workshops with key stakeholders including local services and businesses.
- Built a project place vision closely with the project team from workshop input.
- Had kitchen table conversations and phone calls with key stakeholders that could not attend the workshop.
- Developed a community activity plan to be implemented by the staff member resourced to be on site for six months.

Challenges

- There was different capacities and views on what involvement the organisation should have with their residents.
- The site was the first to be built in a new masterplanned precinct, so was physically separated from the surrounding community.

What went well?

- Increased renter satisfaction.
- Renters reported increased feelings of belonging.
- Increased community cohesion, with neighbours supporting neighbours.
- Improved decision-making for project team, with a clear vision and principles.
- Increase of engagement and placemaking capacities of the project team.
- Benefits showed the importance of engagement within the wider organisation.

Improvements

- The engagement process started after the building was designed, so there was very limited input the community could have into the outcomes.
- Wider organisational involvement or visibility of the processes would have seen an increase in staff capacity in engagement and placemaking.



Image 13: New Epping Residences under construction

Additional resources

Training

- The Groupwork Center provides world class skills training in facilitation. Such skills provide a great foundation to hold space in tricky situations and simple and complex stakeholder and community engagement scenarios.
groupwork.com.au/coursecat/qualifications/
- The Facilitation One Day Wonder workshop brings the best Engagement experts from around Australia to share their skills and stories.
onedaywonder.org.au/
- IAP2 has a superb training course that creates a strong foundation using the IAP2 Engagement Spectrum.
iap2.org.au/dydfuzdvwaAnpiEALw_wcB
- Village Well provide place-based engagement training or specialist engagement and placemaking strategies for challenging projects.
www.villagewell.org/

Resources

- Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health Resource Hub
<https://www.ceh.org.au/resource-hub/>
- Homes Victoria Consultation Guidelines
www.homes.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202108/Homes-Victoria-Consultation-Guidelines-52.20-53.20-July-2021.pdf
- Pride by Side Engagement Guide
<https://www.pridebyside.org/engagement>
- The Tamarack Institute Community Engagement Resources
www.tamarackcommunity.ca/community-engagement
- Victorian Government Working with diverse communities
www.vic.gov.au/place-based-approaches-guide-victorian-public-service/chapter-three-working-diverse-communities
- Victorian Government Place-based approaches: A guide for the Victorian Public Service
www.vic.gov.au/place-based-approaches-guide-victorian-public-service

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