Glenelg Shire Council

Reviewed March 2021

The aim of this resource is to provide practical guidance to Council staff on how to use different techniques and tools to conduct effective community engagement.

The Framework and Engagement Planning template forms part of the resources developed by Council to ensure commitment and consistency across the organisation, when conducting community engagement. The **Community Engagement Policy** should be referenced in conjunction with this framework to ensure the *Local Government Act 2020 (the Act)* legislative requirements are adhered to, and refers to matters that must undertake deliberative engagement.

We recognise and acknowledge the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2 Federation) materials that have been included in this framework document (ECM 2551199).

- Core values of meaningful community engagement
- Council decision making & triggers
- Why community engagement is important
- Guiding principles of Council's community engagement
- The IAP2 Framework

THINK

PLAN

- The planning process - including the Engagement Plan Template
- Project team, scope & timelines
- Identifying potential stakeholders & representative consultation
- Negotiables and non-negotiables
- Accessible engagement - including communication
- Identifying potential risks & sensitivities

- Choosing the right level of engagement
- Deciding on engagement activities
- Resource & scheduling considerations
- Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate & Empower
- Conversation facilitation

DO

EVALUATE

- Evaluating the engagement process
- Participation evaluation
- Evaluation planning
- Analysing data
- Reporting back to Executive Team, Council and the community

Context for Community Engagement

The Council Plan for 2017 - 2021 highlighted the residents' expectations for the future of the shire, and their feedback resulted in the creation of five key themes that act as the foundation of the plan (above). The Community Engagement Framework will guide when and how Council engages with the community on policies, issues, and projects in order to be an increasingly transparent, accessible and responsive organisation.

Community engagement is an obligation of Local Government, as per the Governance and Management Checklist required by Local Government Planning and Reporting Regulations. This Framework was built upon previous engagement strategies and policies and was last revised in 2019.

GROWING GLENELG
Sustaining and growing a diverse economy and social prosperity

CONNECTING GLENELG
Connecting people, places and spaces

LIVEABLE GLENELG
Embracing inclusive, healthy, sustainable and diverse cultures

CREATIVE GLENELG
Creative, inspired, forward-thinking and action-oriented

LEADING GLENELG
Create shared visions within the community, ensuring agreed outcomes

Purpose

The intention of this engagement framework is to outline Council's commitment and approach to working with the community.

This framework:

- outlines a community engagement approach based on best practice;
- promotes a consistent approach to community engagement across Council;
- encourages an inclusive approach to decision making about issues that impact the community; and
- supports the formation of trusting and collaborative relationships between staff, Council and the community.

Framework implementation and monitoring

This Framework was revised in May 2019 and has minor changes following the proclamation of the new *Act*. The framework and accompanying planning template are available in ECM. Council-wide community engagement training was undertaken in October 2019 with staff and Councillors.

The Community Engagement Policy was endorsed by Council on 23 February 2021. This Framework and Template will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains current, meets organisational need and the requirements of the *Act*.

What is engagement?

Engagement, or public participation is *"a process to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision making body"* (IAP2 Code of Ethics, 2005)

Core values

Council's approach to community engagement is informed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

IAP2's core values are:

- Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.

- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

- Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Council decision making

Community engagement is a process, not an outcome. Stakeholders participate so that Council can effectively consider their point of view in their decision making. Taking into consideration stakeholder views, opinions and expectations is only one of many important factors considered in the Council decision making process. To ensure that the Council decision making process is effective, transparent and accountable, decisions are made weighing and balancing community expectations with other factors, such as:

- requirements of the Local Government Act 2020 including the responsibility to make decisions that best meet the needs of the local community;

- other statutory consultation requirements;

- fiscal responsibility;

- economic and financial considerations;

- health and safety considerations;

- equity and diversity considerations; and

- environmental, social and cultural benefits throughout the Shire.

Triggers for Engagement

Community Engagement needs to be undertaken where a proposed change or decision will:

- Significantly affect a set of stakeholders in terms of change of process, economy, lifestyle, environment or amenity of the shire (e.g. policy, strategy, program, project or other issue);

- Significantly affect the way that services are provided, or ratepayer revenue is collected or allocated;

- Be made in relation to the identification and development of New Initiatives and/or Capital Works;

- Likely generate significant stakeholder response or reaction, including strong and mixed views, concern or interest; or

- Trigger a statutory obligation to engage with the community.

Community engagement is also important where Council needs:

- To promote greater community awareness of an issue;

- A mechanism for shared responsibility and problem solving;

- Greater understanding of on-the-ground issues (economic, social and environmental impacts) and community perspectives on Council policy, programs and services;

- Informed decision-making based on local knowledge from those who will be impacted by the decision, including comments, suggestions and alternative options;

- Early warning of problems, or affirmation that relevant issues are being addressed;

- Opportunities to develop long-term and trusting relationships; or

- To actively enhance a reputation of trust and integrity amongst the community.

Why engage with the community?

Those affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision making process.

- Provides the opportunity for more open and transparent communication and accountability.

- Ensures Council gathers information about concerns, ideas and options regarding proposals prior to decision making.

Engagement improves project quality.

- Increases the effectiveness of service delivery and improves risk management practices.

- Increases engagement with stakeholders' interests, encouraging sustainable outcomes by meeting community needs and expectations.

- Assists to identify and work with partners – 'work smarter, not harder'.

Engagement has a positive impact on the community.

- Increases community confidence in, and ownership of, projects undertaken.

- Increases capacity of the community to respond to important social, environmental and economic challenges.

- Increases awareness of current and important issues amongst the community.

- Maximises positive impacts and minimises negative impacts of decisions.

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Community Engagement Principles

The most important success factor for community engagement is a genuine commitment to best practice. Community engagement activities will be guided by the following principles:

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Be Open and Inclusive

- **Inclusiveness -** creating genuine opportunities for all stakeholders to meaningfully participate in a range of ways

- **Accessibility -** information should be provided in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways and activities conducted in accessible locations

- **Diversity -** encouraging broad and representative participation in engagement processes

- **Responsiveness -** valuing stakeholder input by using it to shape and improve policy and outcomes

Engage Early & Be Clear

- **Transparency -** aiming to engage with stakeholders wherever possible before a decision or change is made and being clear about the purpose and level of engagement

- **Integrity -** being clear about how decisions will be made

Create Trust, Respect and Accountability

- **Accountability -** explaining how the information obtained will be used in the decision forming process and communicating the final outcome

- **Neutrality -** conducting our processes fairly, without judgment or bias

- **Equity -** listening to all views, opinions and ideas before coming to a conclusion

- **Respect -** showing consideration of the rights and contributions of community members, by genuinely seeking to understand their point of view and seeing their input as integral

Manage Skills and Resources

- **Resourcing -** ensure that sufficient time and resources are allocated for quality engagement

- **Efficiency -** coordinate community engagement processes to optimise resource use, ensure efficiency and avoid duplication

These principles comply with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. In this Charter both 'freedom of expression' and 'opportunity to take part in public life' are rights that are expressly protected.

Financial implications

Costs associated with community engagement activities will be included into the overall project costs. Any costs that are over and above the Council Budget will be referred to the Council budget process for consideration.

IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum

On the following page is IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum. Example tools are listed within the DO section of the Framework from Pages 17 to 23.

IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION →

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	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 work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	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.

Planning Process

Before starting a Community Engagement Plan, be clear about:

> *What you want to achieve at the end of the process (outcomes) e.g. seeking local knowledge and ideas, obtaining buy-in from stakeholders*

> *What tangible products you want to produce from the stakeholder engagement process (outputs) e.g. research, a report*

Use these aims to determine which level of engagement is most appropriate for your project.

In planning major consultation processes, the following needs to be addressed to ensure uniformity in process:

- Project team structure;
- Which activities require engagement;
- Clear objectives of the engagement process;
- Negotiables and non-negotiables;
- Key messages;
- Key stakeholders;
- Potential risks and sensitivities;
- Engagement methods and timelines;
- Resourcing required;
- How information collected will be used by Council and the project team; and
- Format and timing of evaluation and progress reports to Council, participants and the wider community.

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The Community Engagement Plan Template

Completion and implementation of the Community Engagement Plan Template is the responsibility of each Project Manager. They may choose to delegate this task to a team member, however final approval must be gained from both the Project Manager and Director prior to commencement. In some instances your Manager or Department Director will recommend a report or update to Executive Team and/or Council, so ensure adequate time is allowed for this process in your timeline.

In relation to the stages of this Framework document, the planning template includes 4 sections for completion (with interactive lightbulbs 💡 to assist you with examples and tips);

THINK Project Officer and Sponsor, trigger/s for engagement, why we are engaging, how it will influence the project/activity, scope, level/s of engagement (IAP2 Spectrum)

PLAN Stakeholder mapping, negotiables & non negotiables, web based promotion, existing groups/partners to utilise, future engagement activities/events to utilise, potential risks & sensitivities and measures to address

DO Engagement Plan table with timeframes (including internal reporting to ET & Council), inclusivity considerations, how you will reach the hard to reach, budget Implications, publications to add to (for promotion)

EVALUATE Planning to evaluate: key findings on engagement targets, feedback on process, sharing outcomes, engagement evaluation table

Project Team

Multi-disciplinary project teams encourage consideration of a depth and breadth of views, ensuring that diversity is built into the planning process. This allows advice from specialised skill sets and a range of experiences to be taken into account. Involving a number of people in the project planning phase also increases efficiency, where the workload and learning opportunities are distributed across the organisation. Major projects including new or significant upgrades to infrastructure or strategy development, internal digital transformational processes (e.g. technology upgrades) may require the establishment of a Project Control Group or Project Reference Group.

The development of a project team is effective engagement in itself, with the capacity to build ownership and commitment amongst a broad range of people, organisations or departments. Project teams may include internal and external partners.

Key to developing an effective project team is a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities. A Terms of Reference can assist the project team to:

- Agree on stakeholders, identify and share available reports and background information and set appropriate KPIs;
- Agree on deliverables, meeting schedules, reporting procedures and other project management activities and considerations;
- Agree on preferred engagement processes and methods; and
- Define the roles and responsibilities of project managers.

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> Where projects require early engagement and planning, and poor or non-completion may prevent or delay progress, the responsibility for such activities needs to be clear from project commencement. For example, where capital works are being undertaken, responsibility for determining the requirement for a Cultural Heritage Management Plan or Native Title obligations, and consultation with Native Title Services Victoria and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, needs to be determined. Please refer to the Project Management Framework (in development).

Scope of the Project

It is important that all members of the project team are consistent in their understanding of the scope of a project. An effective project scope statement should include the following considerations;

- **Focus**   • **Limitations**   • **Context**   • **Language**

It will also assist in ensuring the intent of the project remains the focus and that it is clear to the intended participants of the engagement activity. Some projects can require multiple engagement activities throughout the duration of the project phases and for various components within the project. It is worthwhile referring to the overall Project Plan to ensure that all required engagement is included, and the scope is relevant to each stage.

Engagement Timelines

Outlining the timelines for the engagement activity will also assist you in outlining each of the project team members responsibilities. This should include reporting requirements including internal Executive Team, Council Reports and Updates and reporting to stakeholders that might include internal staff, partnering organisations and funding providers.

Identifying Potential Stakeholders

Influential stakeholders – those who have the power to initiate or stop a project. They may:

- Be critical to project delivery
- Be able to slow, obstruct or stop the project

e.g. *Councillors, Project Control Group, funding partners, Glenelg Shire Council officers, State Government departments, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.*

Collaborative stakeholders – those who have the power to contribute to the project. They may:

- Influence opinion and decision making in the region or about the issue
- Be seen as community leaders – formal and informal
- Provide strategic leadership
- Be impacted by the project
- Have resources to contribute
- Have specialist knowledge, skills or interest in the area
- Contribute to capacity building in relevant individuals or communities
- Be able to assist with monitoring and evaluation

e.g. *board members, peak and representative organisations, community groups, residents, landowners and ratepayers.*

Interested stakeholders – those who have an interest in the project. They may:

- Be currently engaged in regional development activities
- Benefit from the project
- Be voiceless, marginalised or harder to reach e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse [CALD], low literacy, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders [ATSI], young people and people with a disability

e.g. *local business, local associations, Youth Advisory Group, Glenelg Shire community (including landholders, rate payers, occupiers, community groups, individuals), and other communities of interest including government agencies, service providers, business and private sector representatives, developers and investors.*

Definitions in Community Engagement

Organisation	**Community**	**Stakeholder**
The entity responsible for the project or proposition, which is the focus of the engagement	Individuals and groups of people, stakeholders, interest groups and citizen groups	Individuals, groups of individuals, organisations or political entity with a specific stake in the outcome of a decision or the impact of a policy, project or proposition.
e.g. government or local government agency, not-for-profit, community organisation, company.	e.g. geographical location, similar interest, of affiliation or identity	

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Stakeholder Mapping

In the Engagement Planning Template the following table is included for completion;

High level of
stakeholder
impact

Involve/Consult

- Ensure needs and concerns are understood and considered
- Obtain feedback on alternatives and/or decisions

Collaborate/Empower

- Partner with on each aspect of the decision
- Potential decision making authority
- Co-design/co-production

Low level of
stakeholder
Interest

High level of
stakeholder
Interest

Inform

- Provide balanced and objective information
- Limited monitoring and management

Consult

- Obtain feedback on alternatives and/or decisions

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Low level of
stakeholder
impact

Identifying the Negotiables and Non-Negotiables

In most decisions or projects some elements cannot be debated or influenced by stakeholders through the engagement process due to budget, viability, safety or legislative requirements.

These elements are called the 'non-negotiables', scoping a decision or project to clearly identify the negotiables and non-negotiables provides all stakeholders with certainty about their role in a process; it enables transparency of the process, is inclusive and assists in setting realistic expectations.

When planning Community Engagement activities, it is important to focus stakeholders' attention on the aspect of the decision or project they can influence in some way - the 'negotiables'.

When planning the engagement process it is important to have an idea of who the decision makers will be and understanding their expectations in relation to timing and the sequence of project activities as per an existing project plan.

The Engagement Planning template includes a table for completion in order to outline the 'non-negotiables' and 'negotiables'.

Increasing Access to the Engagement Process

Engaging with groups typically under-represented in engagement processes is key to ensuring diverse points of view, beliefs and experiences are represented. An inclusive engagement process offers benefits to both participants and project outcomes.

It is important for all stakeholders to have the opportunity to raise awareness of issues that affect them and to take action where possible. The exposure of a wide range of issues and ideas leads to more open and democratic decision making, as well as empowering people through taking on valued roles in project development, addressing relevant issues and influencing outcomes. The appropriateness and effectiveness of projects can be improved when planning incorporates the skills and expertise of these groups.

It may be useful to consider engagement that has taken place with the same stakeholders or on the same issue previously. Look at what went well, the lessons learned and outcomes reached.

"Nothing about us without us"

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Groups who may experience barriers to taking part in community engagement opportunities include young people, people with a disability, older people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. There are a number of key requirements to creating accessible engagement opportunities. For example, consult the *Glenelg Shire Council Youth Charter brochure* (DocSet ID 2373456) for information on the engagement of young people.

Engagement Considerations

- Not all stakeholders need to be involved in all activities and stages of the process. Plan engagement to maximise relevance and effectiveness

- Consider how to best use existing networks, events and relationships to avoid duplication or extra burden on stakeholders and assist in co-ordinating the process more efficiently. This might involve working with existing community groups, or checking if other Council departments need to engage with a similar group of people before planning begins.

- Relying on stakeholders who frequently make active contributions may result in views received not being representative of the target population, or diverse. Put effort in to trying to engage with stakeholders who are typically harder to reach, considering characteristics such as ethnicity, age, gender, values, physical and cognitive abilities, socio-economic background.

- Be aware of the burden that engagement activities can impose: Some organisations and groups in the community are inundated with requests for assistance with engagement activities

- It may be useful to learn about how groups are networked (for example through a peak body) and start there to get assistance with reaching out to and communicating with your target group/s. They can suggest communication styles that might be most effective, as well as practical information about when and where a group meets.

Accessible Activities

Physical Access

Venues for meetings, forums and other community consultation must be physically accessible. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Physically accessible buildings and rooms, for example with the provision of pathways, elevators and ramps to cater for people with mobility impairments. This includes safe linkages between external pathways and buildings.

- Provision of accessible amenities, for example wheelchair accessible toilets.

- Adequate parking facilities and public transport access to allow people from remote locations and people with a disability to attend.

- Lighting around the venue to allow for safe access for participants.

It is also important to ensure that furniture is appropriate for a range of access requirements, such as tables at a height that allow for wheelchair clearance.

Visual Needs

An emphasis should be placed on making presentations and written material as visually appealing and accessible as possible. This includes:

- Providing good quality lighting in venues

- Holding meetings in venues with good acoustics, so that people with visual impairments can clearly hear what is being said.

- Producing presentation and written material with clear and readable print. This includes considering font style, size, colour and use of background imagery.

Hearing Needs

People with hearing impairments may have specific needs, such as hearing loops or access to recorded information.

Support Needs

People with dependents, such as children, should be given the opportunity to participate in engagement activities. This can be achieved by:

- Offering childcare for participants.

- Providing child-friendly settings and activities. For example, a meeting could be held with parents during a playgroup session.

- Using engagement tools that can be accessed from home, such as online platforms and paper surveys.

- Offering transport, such as a community bus.

- Careful consideration of the time that engagement activities are held. For example, avoid scheduling events around dinner time.

When an engagement activity is being promoted, potential participants should be offered the opportunity to advise the organiser of any special needs or requirements they may have.

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Did you know that Council is National Relay Service (NRS) friendly? The NRS is a government initiative that allows people who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have a speech impairment to make and receive phone calls. Council's Contact Us webpage has all the details. Worth including in your promotional materials!

Language

Language barriers should be taken into consideration when preparing written and spoken information. Examples include:

- Offering interpretation of material into different languages to cater for people of cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- Providing information in plain English to cater for people with low literacy levels, or for whom English is not their first language.

> Writing in plain English involves using words and phrases that are as clear and brief as possible. Aim to keep language to a grade 6 comprehension level. For example, rather than asking, "What was the state of the cleanliness of the public amenities?" try, "How clean were the public toilets?". If you're not sure about how clear your language is, ask a co-worker or member of your target audience to proof-read your resources.

Using inclusive language when speaking with and about different groups of people is important. You are engaging with the people, not with a characteristic of theirs. Inclusive language can include:

- Put the person first, rather than their disability by using the phrase 'person with a disability' rather than 'disabled person'. This also applies to people with medical conditions and physical traits. For example, 'people with obesity' rather than 'obese people'.

- Consider how the group you are engaging with may feel about labels typically used by professionals. For example, avoid using terms such as 'at-risk' or 'disengaged' when speaking to young people, as it may be considered offensive.

- Avoid stereotypes. People who share a particular characteristic or disability are still individuals with different needs, interests and ideas.

- Keep language simple. It is important to avoid using jargon, slang or workplace acronyms that aren't readily understood by the group you are engaging with.

Resources

For information on Council expectations around the engagement of people with special access requirements, consult the Glenelg Shire Council People With a Disability Communication Strategy (DocSet ID 2022159). For more detailed information on creating accessible engagement opportunities, read Inclusive Consultation and Communication With People With a Disability by the Department of Human Services.

For a readability checklist (DocSet ID 1399460) and tips for communicating in plain English (DocSet ID 2022364), please consult with the Access and Inclusion Officer.

For information on ensuring online engagement activities are accessible, Engagement HQ - the platform for Your Say Glenelg has included this article on their Blog (link).

Attendance is dependent on awareness

Communication

Promoting Engagement Activities

Stakeholders are only able to take part in engagement opportunities if they are aware of them, therefore consideration should be given to the best methods of promotion. The type and amount of promotion used will depend on the nature of engagement. If engagement is with a specific group of people, promotion does not need to be widespread. Individuals can be targeted for recruitment through one to one contact, such as meetings, telephone contact or written correspondence. Where members of particular groups or people who identify as having particular characteristics are the target of engagement, consider consulting peak and representative organisations.

There are a number of ways to promote engagement activities amongst the wider project stakeholders, each with various strengths and drawbacks. Generally, more than one method of promotion is required to reach the number and variety of stakeholders needed to meet engagement targets. The level of promotion should increase with the anticipated level of impact of the issue or project on the community. If the level of impact is high, then efforts need to be made to ensure as many affected stakeholders have the opportunity to take part in engagement activities.

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Communication and Marketing

Clear and consistent communication is key for managing community expectations of both engagement and project outcomes. It is important to decide early during the planning phase and communicate to potential participants:

- What can actually change as a result of input;

- Whether stakeholders will be involved in final decision making or only to give feedback;

- Expectations of the level of input required of stakeholders;

- How the outcomes of engagement and project will be communicated back to stakeholders; and

- Benefits of participation to stakeholders.

Communication with stakeholders should be clear, concise and timely. Always be open and honest with stakeholders about your objectives and planned activities. Do not make promises that are not achievable and be direct when addressing concerns raised by stakeholders and the community.

In developing a communication plan, verify the accuracy of your message with colleagues and other stakeholders. It is important to share key messages with the project team, so that communication is consistent from all team members.

Ensure the message you are promoting is targeted to the relevant audience. It is important to understand your audience and the context in which they will be receiving your messages.

Please ensure you follow the preferred method of approval of your department or unit and in collaboration with the Media and Communication team. This is particularly important where the engagement topic is sensitive or likely to cause a strong community reaction.

Identifying potential risks and sensitivities

As with many aspects of policy or project work, stakeholder engagement can be complex and present various levels of risk. Identifying and preparing for potential risks early in the engagement process enhances effectiveness and increases the likelihood of successfully achieving desired outcomes.

Common risks include:

- Project workers and stakeholders having a different understanding of engagement objectives, or expectations about the level of influence they may have.

- Stakeholders having insufficient time or information to effectively contribute e.g. if consultation is rushed, or objectives aren't explained fully.

- Stakeholders feeling excluded from the process e.g. due to cultural diversity, disability, language skills or geographic isolation etc.

Risks can be managed by developing strategies to decrease the likelihood of them occurring, or by forming contingency plans to reduce their impact. These may include:

- Secure leadership commitment to the engagement process.

- Seeking to understand stakeholder perception of the engagement process and being clear about objectives.

- Being clear about timeframes, resources and other constraints.

- Maximising stakeholder involvement by actively reducing barriers and ensuring that the benefits of consultation outweigh the costs.

- Establishing a trusting relationship.

- Respecting diversity in areas such as cultural background, language, age, literacy levels, and interest.

- Being flexible in the information you're willing to receive, to allow the opportunity for community interest and alternative options to be explored.

> Engaging with stakeholders who oppose an idea or project can result in receiving advice on risks early. It may also create a sense of ownership and greater commitment amongst stakeholders.

Resources (links)

IAP2 - International Association for Public Participation website

IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement (2015)

Victorian Auditor-General's Office, Public Participation in Government Decision-Making Better Practice Guide (2015)

PLAN

Choosing the right level of engagement Using the IAP2 Spectrum

Moving through the IAP2 spectrum from left to right, there is an increase in the expected level of participation by, and impact of, the community on decision making and project outcomes. As the level of participation increases, so does the strength of the relationship between the organisation and stakeholders.

It is sometimes assumed that the level of difficulty in undertaking engagement increases with the level of participation, however, where engagement is targeted and effective, no part of the spectrum is harder or more preferable than another.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public

Source: IAP2

Undertake a range of levels of engagement, using the following table as a guide.

Project Type	Levels of engagement				
	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Plans – new	✓	✓	✓		
Community Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Policy	✓	✓	✓		
Service level	✓	✓	✓		
Strategy - new or review	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Council Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Capital works	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Financial Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Use of Public Space or Asset	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Local Laws	✓	✓	✓		
Major events	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

DO

Deciding on Engagement Activities

A number of considerations should be made when deciding which engagement activities to undertake. Project context, including the goals and objectives of community engagement, will inform the level of consultation undertaken according to the IAP2 Spectrum.

It is appropriate to consult with stakeholders to get input on their preferred methods of engagement. This can maximise participation and ensure appropriateness of communication and activities. The preferences of stakeholders need to be balanced against the resourcing, skills and availability of the project team. The size and anticipated impact of the project, budget and timeline will inform the final engagement plan.

Resource considerations

When selecting engagement activities it is important to consider logistical factors such as project timelines, resourcing and responsibility of the engagement process;

- What budget or resources are available to undertake the particular engagement method?

- Are there project partners that may contribute resources to the engagement process?

- Who will be responsible for the project?

- How will you action the stakeholder engagement plan? For example, have you planned a venue/tools, will the process be documented, how will feedback be provided?

- Have you developed an analysis method for this tool? Will it capture the tool's success and effectiveness in engaging the community as well as capturing learnings for next time?

External printing should be accounted for in the project budget and organised according to the Procurement Policy and Purchase Order Requisition and Approval Organisational Procedure. If undertaking a mail out, this should be formatted and distributed according to organisational policy. For further information, consult with the Records Management Department.

DO

> **Scheduling Activities**
>
> The timing of activities needs to take into account the ability of individuals to participate. This includes adequate advance notification of activities, appropriate time slots provided for specific/targeted groups and engaging in consultation outside major holiday periods, except where feedback from tourists is specifically sought. Where changes are required to consultation times or timeframes, individuals and groups should be informed of the changes and reasons why they have occurred.

The remaining content in the DO section of this framework is an in-depth look at IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum, which includes the following 5 levels of engagement;

- **Inform** - **Consult** - **Involve** - **Collaborate** - **Empower**

Multiple levels can be selected for an activity or project and throughout the various phases of the engagement process.

Also included is *Conversation Facilitation Hints & Tips* for when you are consulting directly.

Inform

Our promise to the public: We will keep you informed. (IAP2 2014)

Activities that inform the public can provide the basis for building knowledge and skills in the community that may assist with decision making, creating change or addressing issues. In a project context, informing the community and stakeholders should increase their understanding of issues, solutions and alternatives. It can also improve compliance with regulations and other requirements by providing explanation.

Information can be delivered proactively or as a response to questions from stakeholders. Either way, it is important for information to be high quality, factual, consistent, timely, targeted appropriately, clear and easily understood. In order for information to reach the intended audience, it is important to be clear about who you are trying to reach and how they are most likely to access and understand information.

Council uses various web-based platforms for internal and external communication including;

Council Website

The Glenelg Shire Council website contains a range of news, media releases, Council plans and service provision information. Many Council Units have a dedicated section on the website where information and resources can be listed. All media releases by Council can be found on the website. Access to edit the Council website is managed by the Media and Communications Officer.

Facebook & Instagram

Glenelg Shire Council host a number of Social Media pages and groups on Facebook and Instagram. each with a specific purpose. Only Authorised Officers are permitted to post to Council social media accounts. If you wish to promote your activity on the Glenelg Shire Council Facebook page, please discuss with Media and Communications Officer.

Your Say Glenelg

Your Say Glenelg is an online engagement platform from Engagement HQ. This web-based platform offers 8 tools for engagement including surveys, discussion forums, quick polls, guest books, mapping tools, a question and answer section and brainstorming forums. All Council projects that trigger community engagement should utilise Your Say Glenelg.

Examples of engagement activities that 'inform' the community: Newspaper advert, banner, brochure, email, mail out, media release, website, social media, site display.

DO

Resources

For more information on Your Say Glenelg, consult *Online Community Engagement – Your Say Glenelg Framework* (DocSet ID 2064233). The *Your Say Glenelg Engagement pack template* is required for each project or activity (DocSet ID 2159890). Please contact the Your Say Glenelg Site Administrator for further information or assistance.

For more information on organisational expectations around internal and external customer service, refer to the *Glenelg Shire Council Customer Service Charter* (DocSet ID 929930).

For more information on using Council social media accounts, please consult the *Social Media Use Policy* (DocSet ID 1384074).

Consult

Our promise to the public: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals. (IAP2 2014)

Consultation is primarily a feedback mechanism, where stakeholders have the opportunity to comment on and question decisions, plans and potential alternatives. Offering the opportunity for the community to become involved with consultation at the same time that information is released may help mediate strong public reactions. Panic and outrage are less likely to be generated where the community feels they are able to offer feedback and alternative solutions.

Consultation can involve little to no dialogue, for example written consultation in response to a document made available for public comment, or a lot, such as through public meetings. A range of methods can be used to consult with the public, each appropriate to different contexts. It is important to identify who you want to consult with and the most effective way of reaching them and getting a response. Consultation methods will require varying time allowances for stakeholder responses; be mindful of this and any major events that may reduce the response rate.

It is important to ensure that the purpose of consultation is clear to both the project team and participants, including what is being consulted on and what is non-negotiable. Expectations need to be consistent and clear. Try to coordinate requests for information so that views are only asked for once, rather than multiple times. Provide feedback on the results of consultation, particularly where a change of behaviour, attitudes or plans has resulted. This helps to demonstrate to the community that their input is valued and encourages future participation.

Examples of engagement activities that 'consult' the community: Feedback form, focus group, public meeting, social media, suggestion box, survey, Your Say project.

Resources

There are many online resources that assist with communication styles and group facilitation. For ideas and information on facilitation techniques, how to run different workshop sessions, and 'ice breaker' activities, consult the Seeds For Change workbook.

If you would like to learn about how to lead team-based workshop activities, a good resource is page 14 – 16 of the Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL) handbook. For more team building or 'ice breaker' activities, read the YELL handbook appendix.

Conversation Facilitation Hints & Tips

<u>Set up rules for the conversation such as:</u>

- Listen to each other – everyone should have an opportunity to speak. Seek to build on what others say.
- Respect other opinions and ideas. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Share your ideas with the whole group, not only your neighbour.
- As a host, aim to limit how much you will talk. Your job is to encourage the participants to discuss the ideas, and record the key points.
- If the group does not know each other then begin with an introduction and encourage participation from the start.
- Summarise key points at the end of each question. Repeat your summary back to the participants to ensure it is an agreed representation of their ideas.

<u>What to do when a meeting is not going well</u>

When the Discussion is Getting Off Track

A facilitator can use redirection questions to keep a group on topic.

> *"These are excellent points we are discussing. I know we have to get back to our main topic, but I don't want to lose these points. Can we record them on an 'issues list' or something, so we can discuss them later and then get back to our main topic?"*

Asking this question can help take some of the sting out of the redirection.

When One Person is Dominating

A facilitator can use specific techniques for addressing dysfunctional behaviour, including a situation in which one person is dominating the discussion.

> *"This is an important point we are discussing, and Joe has openly shared his views. It would be great to hear everyone else's opinion on this. Can we go around the room and have everyone give their view on this idea?"*

When One or More Participants Have Dropped Out of a group discussion

The round-robin technique that is used when one person is dominating the discussion will also work when you sense that one or more people are not participating.

> *"This is an important issue we are discussing. It would be great to hear everyone else's opinion on this. Can we go around the room and have everyone give their view on this idea? Would someone like to start…"*

DO

Involve

Our promise to the public: We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. (IAP2 2014)

Involvement and consultation differ in the expected level of participation and influence by stakeholders. Involvement is a level of engagement at which participants are invited to work through issues and alternatives to assist in the decision making process, however the lead organisation ultimately retains decision making responsibility. Stakeholder concerns should be directly reflected in solutions and alternatives offered, with explicit understanding of how input will be incorporated into the decision making process.

When involvement takes place in the context of an advisory group or committee, it is important to avoid misunderstanding by clearly establishing the basis for membership (for example on the basis of skills or representation of a specific group), decision making process (for example by vote or consensus), and roles and responsibilities.

Examples of engagement activities that 'involve' the stakeholders: Community forum or meeting, stakeholder interviews, meetings with target population, site tour, workshop session.

Collaborate

Our promise to the public: We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. (IAP2 2014)

In collaborative engagement, ownership is shared between the organisation and the stakeholders. A greater level of decision making is delegated to participants in collaborative engagement, compared to involvement, however the organisation instigating engagement may still retain overall decision making power. The extent and type of delegated decision making power needs to be clear to project workers and participants from the beginning. In order to minimise risks that are inherent with collaborative decision making, it is important to establish trust and an alignment of core values. This will ensure effective and productive partnerships, where decisions can be made without constant reference back to the lead organisation.

Examples of community engagement activities that 'collaborate' with stakeholders: Joint advisory committees, strategic reference groups, working parties.

DO

Empower

Our promise to the public: We will implement what you decide. (IAP2 2014)

In empowerment approaches to engagement, decision making and accountability is shared between the stakeholders and the lead organisation. The decision making power of the stakeholders may be limited to a particular issue or time frame, or extensive and run for the full length of a project. Issues around accountability and reporting methods need to be carefully considered prior to commencement.

There needs to be sufficient resources and commitment from both the stakeholders and project team for an empowerment process to be effective and beneficial. A critical number of interested community members, who possess the requisite passion, skills and knowledge, must be available for projects to build momentum. There must also be commitment by the organisation that initiated the engagement process to participate as a stakeholder and share decision making power.

While not suitable for a large range of Council projects, the empowerment process can be a rewarding one. Reduced conflict, innovative results that incorporate a diverse range of knowledge, stakeholder ownership of outcomes and commitment to ongoing action can significantly improve the sustainability and appropriateness of a project.

DO

Evaluating the engagement process

Effective evaluation builds support and evidence for activities, and allows best practice to be developed. Evaluation enables you to reflect on the process, refine it for the future and engage more effectively with stakeholders.

Quality evaluation takes place at all stages of a project. Data collected at the beginning of the engagement process can be used for later comparison. Information collected during engagement can be used to reflect on processes used, while information collected at the end can be used to measure engagement outcomes.

Information collected for evaluation may be quantitative, such as attendance numbers, or qualitative, such as quotations. The questions you wish to answer and evaluation methods determine whether quantitative or qualitative data is more appropriate.

Participant evaluation

It is important to give stakeholders the opportunity to give feedback on activities or processes they were a part of. The most common method of doing this is through feedback forms, however there are also a number of creative ways that you can get this information.

Debriefing tools are used widely with youth and low literacy populations, but can be adapted to suit a range of audiences. They offer the opportunity to get feedback in an informal way, and also to build stronger relationships between team or group members. Debrief scripts focus participants on specific types of feedback, helping to keep the group 'on track' and avoid unnecessary negative tangents.

Evaluation Planning

Planning to evaluate will assist you to ensure you are capturing the information you need throughout the engagement process. Engagement methods can be reviewed and adjusted where required to ensure a successful engagement process. It may help to refer back the reasons you are engaging.

The following sections are included in the engagement planning template for completion.

The Engagement Targets

How will you know these are met?

How will you ensure you receive the information you require?

Feedback on the Engagement Process

How and when will you seek feedback on the process from the stakeholders & partners?

Sharing the engagement outcomes

How and when will you provide the engagement outcomes to the participants, wider community, partners & stakeholders?

EVALUATE

Analysing Data

It is important to consider how you analyse the data you have collected to address your evaluation questions. It can be tempting to capture lots of qualitative data, without considering how you will analyse it, and the time needed to do this well.

Examples of common debrief activities include Traffic Debrief, 5 Finger Evaluation, Body Part Debrief, Plus Minus Interesting and Think-Pair-Share. Instructions for each of these activities, plus many more, can be found online. The following table is what has been included for completion on the Engagement Planning Template.

	What do you want to know?	What evaluation methods will you use?	How will the evaluation be conducted?
Process	• What planning processes worked well? • What could be improved or done differently in the future? • Were adequate time and resources allocated to the engagement process?	Examples: • Interviews • Observations and reflections • Online surveys • Feedback forms • Focus groups • Quantitative data collection (e.g. attendance numbers)	Examples: • Project team meets after a consultation event to share their observations • Project manager conducts one-on-one interviews with selected stakeholders one week after engagement • Workshop participants asked to complete feedback form at the conclusion of the event • Project team analyses data on number and demographics of engagement participants
Engagement	• Has the engagement process worked well? • What could be improved or done differently in the future? • Were logistics and risks adequately identified and managed? • Was the number of stakeholders and scope of engagement adequate? • Were intended outcomes achieved?		
Outcomes	• How have the engagement outcomes impacted the project/ issue/policy? • Has the quality of services, projects or programs improved? • Did stakeholder commitment to the policy or project increase?		

EVALUATE

Reporting back to Executive Team, Council and the community

Providing timely feedback to Executive Team and Council on engagement outcomes helps create a uniform understanding of projects across the organisation and may assist with minimising duplication of engagement efforts.

A Councillor Update should be provided, via Executive Team, upon commencement and completion of community engagement that is undertaken, detailing any major points and issues that arose. Projects Managers may be requested to provide a full Councillor Report and Workshop Presentation detailing engagement plans and outcomes relating to their projects, particularly where projects are major or topical.

When consultation outcomes are shared, it is important to use multiple methods of communication to ensure that the information is received by all interested parties. Contact details can be collected from individuals and groups who participated in engagement activities, which provides the opportunity for targeted feedback. The wider community can be informed through a mixture of formal communication, such as media releases, and informal communication, such as through popular Facebook groups. It is extremely important to reach out to people, rather than expecting them to research and find information.

Set a reminder in your calendar for any engagement deadlines so you can update information on your project and start collating the submissions. Also set a reminder for when reports and outcomes will be confirmed so you can provide these to the engagement participants and the wider community.

EVALUATE