

Engaging with your community

*Expect to learn something new about your community
when engaging with older people.*

**This fact sheet includes information about planning for
engagement and consultation.**

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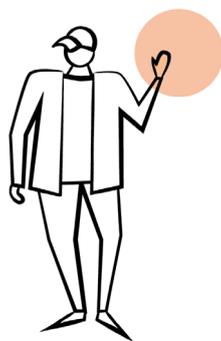
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Planning engagement¹

When planning for community engagement, Council need to think about:

- Who needs to be involved: *community members, businesses, organisations*
- How participants will be engaged: *recruitment, mode of consultation, follow-up*
- What budget is available
- Risks and how these will be managed
- What success looks like and how it will be measured and reported
- Participants confidentiality and rights
- Data protection
- Policies and procedures required
- Cultural or ethical requirements



¹ *Engaging with Older People Evidence Review*. Age UK. Retrieved from: www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Evidence_Review_Engagement_with_Older_People.pdf?dtrk=true

Questions for planning a community consultation²

Work through the questions with relevant stakeholders as a starting point to planning your community consultations.

1. Purpose

- What is the purpose of this consultation?
- Why is it being done?
- What exactly am I consulting about — am I looking for comment on a draft recommendation or conclusion (i.e. a closed consultation) or am I generating ideas about an issue (i.e. an open consultation)?
- Is the start and finish of the consultation process clear?
- How will the consultation improve the final outcome?

2. Identify stakeholders

- Who are the stakeholders with regard to the issue/s under question?
- Are there any groups of stakeholders which are difficult to access?
- What am I going to do to ensure these people have the opportunity to be heard?
- How can I take the consultation to them?
- If a venue is involved, is it suitable and accessible?

3. Provide Information

- What information am I providing to the people who are being consulted?
- Is the information adequate to ensure that they can express an informed opinion?
- Is the information provided in a way which is easily understandable, meaningful and fun?
- Am I providing adequate opportunity for people to receive the information or was it a “one-off” item?



² *A Community Consultation Tool*, Volunteering Queensland. Retrieved from https://volunteeringqld.org.au/docs/Resource_WT_Community_Consultation_Tool.pdf

4. Timing

- At what stage of the process is consultation occurring?
- Is it early enough to help identify all the issues or is it merely seeking comment on already identified issues?
- Is it sufficiently early in the process for people to feel that the organisation is genuinely interested in their opinions?

5. Feedback and Transparency

- Is the decision-making process clear and has this been communicated with respondents?
- Is there a plan for how feedback is to be provided to respondents?

6. Evaluation

- Is evaluation part of the consultation plan?
- Is there a commitment to undertake the evaluation?
- How will the organisation use the outcomes from the evaluation to ensure better consultation practices in the future?
- How will participants contribute to the evaluation process?

7. Resourcing

- Has a proper consultation plan been developed as part of the project or issue planning?
- Is there adequate resourcing for the consultation plan?
- What arrangements have been put in place for financial and human resources?



Who will be engaged?

Older people and community members from a range of backgrounds should be included from the very beginning of the engagement process. Community members can provide ideas about:

- What topics should be considered
- How to engage other members of the community
- What methods of engagement may be effective

Many older Tasmanians are actively engaged in community activities and advocacy. This group is relatively easy to reach and add great value to engagement. But it's important to hear the experiences of vulnerable or disadvantaged community members who can be difficult to engage, but who face the biggest barriers to liveability and best ideas to address them.

Some people who may be difficult to reach include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- People on low income or experiencing poverty
- People experiencing homelessness
- People living with vision or hearing impairment
- People living with disability
- People with low literacy and numeracy skills
- People who are socially isolated

How do we reach older community members?

Information about engagement should be available online and in hard-copy, and include:

- What it aims to address
- Why it is important
- How people can be involved
- Who to contact for more information (including a phone number)

Talking to organisations that work with people who may be difficult to engage is a good start to hear their valuable experiences and ideas for change.

These may include:

- Neighbourhood Houses
- Libraries
- Aged care at home providers
- Community transport
- Community services such as Meals on Wheels
- Community groups such as School for Seniors
- Advocacy and support organisations

You can gain valuable insight from organisations and groups that work with older Tasmanians about peoples' experiences to identify liveability challenges and solutions.

Some of these places may have regular groups, which are good starting points for face-to-face consultation. These sessions can be hosted at times that people are already meeting in a familiar and comfortable environment.

Consider providing these groups with hard copy surveys or materials with reply paid envelopes that people can complete in their own time and post back to you. Hard copy materials and reply paid envelopes should be available for people on request.

It's also useful to work with community members who are active in the community and can speak to other community members about being involved.

Ways to engage^{3,4}

It is important to keep engagement community driven and focused. Ensure questions, conversation and discussion are open-ended rather than focused on issues that Council sees as important.

Older Tasmanians are very diverse and consultation methods should cater to a range of interests, abilities, and motivations. Some people may prefer completing surveys at home in their own time; others may enjoy discussing issues in a group. Some people may prefer to answer two or three key questions, and some may enjoy to present their ideas or experiences artistically.

Using a number of engagement methods will increase the opportunity for a diverse range of people in your community to participate. You may consider using some of the following:

- Focus groups;
- Surveys;
- Art and creativity;
- Mapping;
- Web-based engagement.



³ Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement (2014) Community Places and BIG Lottery Fund. Retrieved from: <https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf>

⁴ Better Together: a practical guide to effective engagement with older people, Government of South Australia. Retrieved from: <http://bettertogether.sa.gov.au/prepare>

Focus groups

Strengths

- Encourages active discussion and development of ideas
- Identification and clarification of key issues
- Conflict can be handled easily within a small group
- Can be targeted at specific groups

Weaknesses

- May not represent the diversity within the community
- Requires a moderate amount of time and resources
- Can be dominated by articulate and confident individuals if not carefully facilitated
- Is not suitable for discussion of personal issues

Tips/ideas

- Contact existing community groups to see if you can hold the focus group at a time and place that older people are already meeting
- Ensure venues are central, provide parking, have disability access and facilities, and good acoustics
- Time focus groups for mid-morning or early afternoon — avoid peak hours, school pick up time, after dark and meal times
- Provide refreshments
- Try to keep the group to a maximum of about 12 people to ensure everyone has a chance to have their say
- If more than 15 people attend, consider splitting into smaller groups to discuss topics and finish with a large group discussion
- Carefully plan out a timed agenda and questions to prompt discussion
- Facilitators must ensure that the agenda is kept to (roughly) and that everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion
- Aim to keep the session to 1-1.5 hours — this may mean you only cover some topics so have a procedure in place to determine how you choose these

How-tos

Conducting Focus Groups, Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-focus-groups/main>

Tips for Conducting Focus Groups, University of Southern Queensland: www.usq.edu.au/-/media/USQ/Research/Ethics/human/Tipsforconductingfocusgroupsv10.ashx?la=en

Krueger, R.A (2002) Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews: www.eiu.edu/~ihcc/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf

Surveys

Strengths

- Can get the views of lots of people
- Quantitative data can be statistically analysed
- Can be used to get feedback from people who are isolated
- Useful for identifying specific issues
- Is anonymous
- Can be completed when convenient for the participant

Weaknesses

- Need to be well designed so participants can complete accurately
- People may not complete surveys with lots of questions
- Answers and comments cannot be expanded on or clarified
- Responses rates can be quite low (10-20%)
- Participants require good literacy and interpretation skills, or support

Tips/ideas

- Use an online survey app (e.g. Survey Monkey: www.surveymonkey.net) to develop a survey and check its 'survey score'.
- Make sure questions only ask one thing.
- Keep surveys as short as possible with clear instructions, expectations and purpose, adequate options for response, and opportunity for further comment.
- Provide both online and hard copy surveys and encourage people to contact you to mail hard copies to them (with a reply paid envelope).
- Use a community service that visits people at home to give the survey to people who are isolated. Examples are the library book service, Meals on Wheels, or aged care providers.
- Where suitable, provide an open answer for each question for additional comments.
- Have a couple of community members complete the survey to make sure it's clear before distributing it.
- Contact state or federal government representatives or local business owners to sponsor the printing of your hard copy surveys.

More information

Surveys 101, Survey Monkey: www.surveymonkey.com/mp/survey-guidelines/

Designing a Survey, Science Buddies:
www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/project_ideas/Soc_survey.shtml

10 Key Things to Consider When Designing Surveys, Survey Gizmo:
www.surveygizmo.com/survey-blog/designing-surveys/

Postcards

Strengths

- Can get the views of lots of people
- Relatively easy to give to people who are isolated
- Can be completed quickly
- Useful for identifying specific issues
- Is anonymous
- Can be completed at convenience of the participant

Weaknesses

- Need to be well designed and coded so participants can complete accurately
- Limited space for questions and responses
- Answers and comments cannot be expanded on or clarified
- Participants require good literacy and interpretation skills, or support
- No opportunity to talk or brainstorm ideas in a group setting
- Requires participants to mail back postcard

Tips/ideas

- Keep postcard questions to a maximum of five.
- Make sure questions are short, clear, and ask for only one thing.
- Include a bright, attractive design to catch people's attention.
- Have a reply paid postcard so participants can easily return it without cost.
- You can use the same key questions to do a quick survey on social media.
- Use a community service that visits people at home to give the postcard to people who are isolated. Examples are the library book service, Meals on Wheels, or aged care providers.
- Have a couple of older members of the community complete your postcard to check its success before distributing it
- Contact state or federal government representatives or local business owners to sponsor the printing of your hard copy postcards

More information

Easy Consultation Toolkit (page 12), Short Breaks Fund:

<https://lx.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/sbf-easy-consultation-toolkit.pdf>

Art and creativity

Strengths

- Suitable for all age groups and literacy skills
- Can be exhibited to generate further discussion
- Interactive and engaging

Weaknesses

- Not everyone is confident in their creative skill
- Interpretation of participant's ideas and responses may be difficult

Tips/ideas

- Use multiple artistic methods such as poetry, photography, vox-pops, artwork, and story-telling.
- Display some responses on social media (with consent) to generate interest.
- Develop a hashtag for people to tag their relevant photos on Instagram.
- Ask local community groups to take part.

More information

How arts and cultural strategies enhance community engagement and participation, American Planning Association:

www.planning.org/research/arts/briefingpapers/engagement.htm

Evaluation 101, Art Reach Toronto: www.artreach.org/evaluation101



Mapping

Strengths

- Can build a sense of community ownership
- Gain perspective from different people's experiences
- Places barriers and solutions at exact locations

Weaknesses

- Participants need to be familiar with local area
- Can be difficult to interpret participants' ideas
- Can generate ideas which are not possible to implement

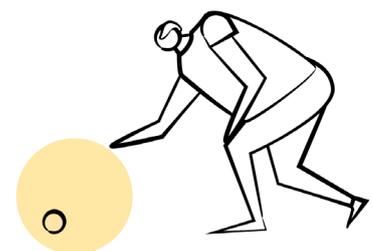
Tips/ideas

- Walk with community members around their local area or have participants film a typical journey to visualise and experience the barriers they face
- Provide maps of community or shopping areas to community members and ask them to make notes about their experiences within that area

More information

Alternative Age-friendly Handbook:

www.micra.manchester.ac.uk/connect/news/headline-431019-en.htm



Web-based engagement

Strengths

- Cost effective
- Can reach a large audience, some of whom may be homebound
- People can participate at a time and place that is convenient to them

Weaknesses

- Some people are not online
- Some techniques may require a moderator to manage comments
- Some techniques may require consideration of security and privacy

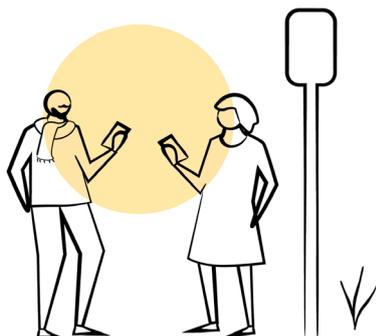
Tips/ideas

- Post specific questions or voting polls on social media to generate discussion and feedback
- Set up a closed Facebook group for local engagement and discussion
- Create a community bulletin board on Pinterest

More information

Set up a public consultation — Digital Standards (Government of Victoria):

<https://www.vic.gov.au/set-public-consultation>



We asked, you said, we did ...⁵

Providing feedback to community and consultation participants demonstrates that you listened, respected and took on board their ideas and issues. Providing feedback to participants should occur throughout the engagement process, not just at the end.

Some people who are part of your engagement may not want to receive feedback about your consultation, so have some way of allowing people to provide contact details and opt-in to staying informed.

Feedback loops should include three elements:

We asked ...

Remind people about what the engagement was about and why it was being carried out. If you asked specific questions or provided material, share these again.

You said ...

Provide people with an overview of participant feedback, both as a whole consultation and as individual groups. For instance, you may provide an overview of all focus group responses and highlight key themes and interesting points, but also include specific issues and ideas that were raised in individual focus groups. General information about the consultation can be sent to people who expressed an interest in engagement but did not attend an event or group.

We did ...

Outline what community input contributed to and why it was or wasn't used. People will appreciate transparent and honest feedback, even if their ideas and opinions were unable to influence the final outcomes. Always give participants information about reports that are produced from engagement so they can access them.

Completing the feedback loop is a great opportunity to officially thank people for their input and participation.

Feedback loops include:

- **We asked:** Remind people about the engagement
- **You said:** Provide community with an overview of feedback
- **We did:** Outline what input contributed to

⁵ *Better Together: a practical guide to effective engagement with older people*, Government of South Australia. Retrieved from: <http://bettertogether.sa.gov.au/prepare>

Barriers and solutions to engagement

Community members

Barriers ^{6,7}	Solutions
People may not identify as 'older'.	Find out how members of your community would like to be defined. Rather than asking for 'older' people, maybe ask for people over a certain age to participate e.g. People over 65 years of age, or with an interest in ageing issues.
Limited digital literacy.	Make sure that you include older people who are not online by distributing information and engagement materials in hard copy. This may mean you have to mail flyers and surveys to people, distribute materials through family members or organisations that have direct contact with older people, or have materials available in places where older people often visit.
Difficulty engaging local people.	Connect with existing community groups and events that already engage older people. People may be more likely to contribute if you are meeting with them at a time, place and environment that they already meet and feel comfortable in. Talk with organisations and services who work with hard to reach groups to engage with them.
Engagement materials may be too long or confusing.	All engagement materials and methods should be clear, concise and written in plain English (see 26TEN https://26ten.tas.gov.au/communicate-clearly/Pages/About-this-guide.aspx). Offer multiple options for people to contribute – some long and that offer detail, others that require only short amounts of time and effort. Include short breaks, drinks and a meal or snack for long meetings and events.
Lack of confidence, skills or time.	Provide a range of different modes for people to engage that cater to different people's needs.

⁶ *Engaging with Older People Evidence Review*. Age UK. Retrieved from: www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Evidence_Review_Engagement_with_Older_People.pdf?dtrk=true

⁷ *Better Together: a practical guide to effective engagement with older people*, Government of South Australia. Retrieved from: <http://bettertogether.sa.gov.au/prepare>

Barriers ^{6,7}	Solutions
Physical and cognitive challenges.	Offer multiple options for engagement, including those that can be completed at home with support and in one's own time. Use accessible fonts and formatting in engagement materials so people with vision impairment can access it. Contact VisAbility Tasmania (6232 1222; admin@guidedogstas.com.au) for an Accessibility checklist.
Transport and accessibility of meetings or events.	Venues used for engagement should be central, easy to get to, provide parking, close to public transport, and have disability access and toilet facilities. If necessary, offer council transport to pick people up or reimbursement for travel costs for those who have to travel large distances, use public transport or taxis.
Timing of meeting or event.	Avoid having meetings or events too early, at peak hours, school pick up times, meal times and after dark. Aim for mid-morning or early afternoon.
Hospitality.	Consider providing drinks and snacks or a meal during meetings or events. This will not only help people feel appreciated but can provide an opportunity for a break, draw out issues through informal conversation and keep energy levels up.
Culture and language of organising staff may be different or confusing for community members.	Avoid ageist language or behaviour, and make sure to use plain English at all times (see 26TEN). If engaging with people from different cultures, work with cultural leaders to learn about culturally sensitive practices. Consider training staff in cultural awareness if you will be engaging regularly with people from diverse cultures.
Feeling that no change will come of engagement.	Provide information that shows that council fully supports the consultation and change. Tell people about how outcomes will be measured and how they will be kept informed about this.
Participation overload.	Avoid engaging with the same groups every time, or groups who have had recent consultation with other organisations.

Council

Barriers ⁸	Solutions
Community engagement can be difficult, time-consuming and expensive.	Ensure you have a strong plan for consultation — know what methods you will use, who you will target, how you will target them, what organisations you can partner with, and how you will promote the consultation. Try to use existing resources as much as possible, such as council resources and community groups.
Community members may not have the skills to fully participate in engagement.	Provide a range of ways that people can engage, including some that require little skill. Work with community organisations that support people with low literacy, non-English speaking backgrounds, who live with disability, or who are isolated to support them to engage.
Lack of skills and/or experience within the council in engaging with older people.	Collaborate with organisations that often work with older people and other members of the community to seek advice on engagement. Use resources provided in this Toolkit to gain good understanding of population ageing and Liveable Communities.
A lack of internal communication, policies and prioritisation by council leadership.	Ensure someone in your council is responsible for and invested in managing your Liveable Community plan. Prepare policies and procedures for communication, conflict management, evaluation and monitoring when planning community consultation. Educate all council members about Liveable Communities, the benefits of them for council and community, and the responsibility of council to ensure liveability. Create a specific and achievable Action Plan that council can support.
Council's may not support participation.	Provide councillors/aldermen and council staff with materials to raise awareness about the opportunities and challenges presented by population ageing and Liveable Communities, and provide staff training where appropriate.
Lack of monitoring and communication.	Ensure you have strong monitoring, evaluation and communication plans in place before beginning consultation. Have a clear idea of how you will record information, provide feedback to participants, report your Plan to different community areas, and implement your Plan.

⁸ *Engaging with Older People Evidence Review*. Age UK. Retrieved from: www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Evidence_Review_Engagement_with_Older_People.pdf?dtrk=true

What resources do councils need to engage?

Effective community engagement may require significant time, finances and resources from councils depending on the primary engagement method used. These are important to consider when planning budgets and community engagement methods.

Time

- Becoming familiar with background information;
- Organising community engagement (contacting groups, booking suitable venues, organising transport);
- Promoting community engagement (developing material, contacting sites for advertising, social media);
- Travelling to and from meetings;
- Preparing and sourcing engagement materials;
- Analysing engagement feedback;
- Building relationships with participants and organisations.

Finances

- Printing costs of promotional material and engagement resources;
- Mailing and distribution of engagement materials;
- Staff and support people's wages;
- Venue hire and transport;
- Using a translator when engaging with CALD groups;
- Financial incentives or reimbursement for participation.

Resources

- Consultation and promotional material;
- Leading and support staff and volunteers;
- Participant carers, services, supports and translators;
- Venues and facilities.



Useful community engagement contacts

You as your local council will have the best idea about groups and organisations in your community that you can contact and work with to reach the widest audience for engagement. If you are having trouble connecting with a specific group, here are some organisations that may be able to help you.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

6234 0700
www.tacinc.com.au

Karadi Aboriginal Corporation

6272 3511
www.karadi.org.au

Aboriginal Elders Council of Tasmania

6334 3138

Office of Aboriginal Affairs— Department of Premier and Cabinet

6232 7082
www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/csr/oa

Carers and volunteers

Carers Tasmania

1800 242 636
www.carerstas.org

Alzheimer's Australia Tasmania

Hobart: 6279 1100
Launceston: 6326 3488
Ulverstone: 6425 9104
<https://tas.fightdementia.org.au>

Volunteering Tasmania

1800 677 895
www.volunteeringtas.org.au

Community groups and organisations

School for Seniors

University of the 3rd Age (U3A)

Local U3A's can be found at
www.u3aonline.org.au/find-a-u3a

Senior Citizens Clubs

Local Seniors Citizens Clubs can be found at www.clubsofaustralia.com.au/Seniors-Citizen-andd-Retirees/Clubs-in-Tasmania.html?s_type=s?s_type=s

Residential Care Facilities

Day Centres

Country Women's Association (CWA)

Local CWA's can be found at
www.cwatas.org.au

Men's Sheds

Local Men's Sheds can be found at
www.tasmanianmensshed.org.au

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCOT)

6285 9907

www.mcot.org.au (you can find a list of different CALD community groups at this website)

Multicultural Resource Centre (MRC)

Northern Tasmania

6332 2211

www.mrc1tn.org.au

Multicultural Resource Centre (MRC)

Southern Tasmania

6221 0999

www.mrchobart.org.au

Hearing impaired

Australian Hearing

Find your local centre here:

www.ahcentres.com.au/tasmania

Home services

Meals on Wheels

1800 696 325

www.mowtas.org.au

Community Transport Services Tasmania

6208 8500

www.ctst.org.au

Home Care service providers

Find your local service providers here:

www.myagedcare.gov.au/service-finder?tab=home-care-package-providers

LGBTIQ

Working It Out

6231 1200

www.workingitout.org.au

Low literacy and numeracy

26TEN

1300 002 610

www.26ten.tas.gov.au

Rural and remote

Rural Alive and Well

6254 1092

www.rawtas.com.au

Vision impaired

VisAbility Tasmania

1800 484 333

www.guidedogstas.com.au

Resources

A Community Consultation Tool, Volunteering Queensland: https://volunteeringqld.org.au/docs/Resource_WT_Community_Consultation_Tool.pdf

Alternative Age-friendly Handbook, Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing: www.micra.manchester.ac.uk/connect/news/headline-431019-en.htm

Better Together: A practical guide to effective engagement with older people, Government of South Australia: <http://bettertogether.sa.gov.au/prepare>

Birchall, J. & Simmons, R. (2004) *User Power: the participation of users in public services*. National Consumers Council. Retrieved from: https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/3261/1/NCC071ft_user_power.pdf

Community Engagement Framework 2013-2018, The City of Newcastle: www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Newcastle/media/Documents/Engagements/Comm_Engagement_framework_Final_2.pdf

Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement, Big Lottery Fund & Community Places: www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf

Engaging with Older People Evidence Review, Age UK: www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Evidence_Review_Engagement_with_Older_People.pdf?dtrk=true