COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

A HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS

CENTRE FOR INVASIVE SPECIES SOLUTIONS

PennState College of Agricultural Sciences

une University of New England

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Material in this handbook is drawn from online learning tools developed by extension staff at Pennsylvania State University in collaboration with the University of New England (Australia). This collaboration was supported by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, Australia.

Online tools and learning modules can be viewed at the following sites (current December 2017):
PestSmart connect: https://www.pestsmart.org.au
Penn State Community Engagement Toolbox:
http://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/engagement-toolbox

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Cite this work as:
Alter, Driver, Frumento, Howard, Shufstall and Whitmer (2017) *Community engagement for collective action: a handbook for practitioners.* Invasive Animals CRC, Australia.

We would like to thank the International Association for Public Participation (iap2) for granting permission to reproduce their 'Spectrum of Participation' graphic. Find out more about the Association at www.iap2.org

Designed and typeset by compu-vision

Cover image: Wild dog Facilitator Dave Worsley at work with community members. Image supplied by the Invasive Animals CRC.

INTRODUCTION

Across Australia and the world, governments, industry bodies and community members are struggling to tackle serious and complex environmental and social issues. Growing economic inequality, increasing population pressure and the unpredictable impacts of climate change are all issues that have both global and local dimensions.

Policy interventions are often based on assumptions of both scientific and social values. However, when faced with difficult decisions in complex contexts, better decisions and more effective action are likely to result from combining specialised knowledge with community values and local knowledge.

This recognition has led to calls for increased community engagement, as policy makers and practitioners realise that incorporating community values into decisions can increase the likelihood of community acceptance and community-led action.

Effective community engagement seeks to engage a broad range of stakeholders to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes to complex problems. Community engagement efforts come in many shapes and sizes and may be designed to meet a number of goals. Many efforts seek to build social capital and strengthen community relationships and trust. Others are designed to address specific challenges or issues, by unlocking the social resources that emerge when individual citizens think and act collectively.

Regardless of the issue under consideration, the practice of community engagement is a growing one. This handbook brings together key theories and practices of community engagement to assist practitioners develop their own engagement plans, put them into practice and learn how to improve through evaluation of these efforts. The handbook also encourages practitioners to develop the skill of 'reflective learning' and a range of 'practice tips' are identified throughout to strengthen this practice.

PRACTICE TIP

THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

'Reflexive learning' is the process of considering, contemplating and deliberating on an issue, topic or experience that results in a change in your perspective and understanding. There are six basic components of reflexive learning:

1. **A tension between what you see taking place in your engagement effort and what you would expect to be happening based on previous experience.**
2. **Identification or clarification of the source(s) of the differences.**
3. **Openness to new information from internal and external sources and perspectives.**
4. **Resolution and insight that is often described as an "aha!" moment when the concern is resolved.**
5. **Considering your personal perspectives with past and present experiences and how these might impact your relationships and work in the future.**
6. **Deciding whether to act on the outcome of the reflective process.**

(**Source:** Boyd and Fales 1983, *Reflective Learning: Key to Learning from Experience*. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, Vol. 23 No. 2, Spring 1983 99-117.)

PART 1

PLANNING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This handbook is designed for practitioners who want to plan, implement and evaluate a community engagement process. The handbook introduces key concepts, skills, tools, and strategies required to bring stakeholders together to develop and implement projects that more effectively address the issues they are facing.

DEFINITION

'Community engagement' is the process of working collaboratively with groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special concern, community concern or similar situations to address the issues affecting them. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental, social and behavioural changes to improve collective well-being. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilise resources and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices.

COMMUNITY + ENGAGEMENT

The word 'community' is a broad term used to define groups of people, whether they are stakeholders, interest groups, or citizen groups. A community may be a geographic location (community of place), a community of similar interest or concern, or a community of affiliation or identity such as an industry or sporting club.

The linking of the term 'community' to 'engagement' serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with associated implications for inclusiveness that ensure consideration is made of the **diversity of interests, values and perspectives** that exist within any community.

Citizens are 'engaged' when they play a meaningful role in the deliberations, discussions, decision-making and/or implementation of the projects or programs that affect them.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MATTERS BECAUSE IT:

- Increases the likelihood that projects or solutions will be supported. Citizens who participate in authentic and transparent engagement processes are more likely to make a significant commitment to help make the projects happen.
- Creates more effective solutions by drawing on the local knowledge of a diverse group of stakeholders to find solutions that are practical and effective.
- Improves citizens' knowledge and skills in problem solving. Participants learn about the issues in-depth. Greater knowledge allows them to see multiple sides of the problem. Citizens can increase their communication and decision-making skills.
- Empowers and integrates people from different backgrounds. When people from different parts of the community work together, they often find that they share some common ground.
- Creates local networks of community members. The more people who know what is going on and who are willing to work toward a goal, the more likely a community is to be successful in reaching its goals.
- Creates opportunities for raising and discussing concerns. Regular, on-going interactions allow people to express concerns before problems become too big or get out of control.
- Increases trust in community organizations and governance. Working together improves communication and understanding. Knowing what government, community citizens and leaders, and organisations can and cannot do may reduce future conflict.

Source: Bassler, Brasier, Fogle and Taverno (2008) 'Developing Effective Citizen Engagement: A How-to Guide for Community Leaders.' Center for Rural America, 2008. http://www.rural.palegislature.us/Effective_Citizen_Engagement.pdf

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Communities are different. They have different histories, leaders, power structures, priorities, cultures and mix of citizens. Because of these differences, there is really **no single model or recipe for undertaking community engagement efforts.** Successful community engagement efforts are driven by practitioners who are guided by core values and guiding principles.

CORE VALUES

Core values for best practice community engagement include:

- The belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- The promise that the community's contribution will influence the decision or the outcome.
- A commitment to aim for sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.

These values are demonstrated by:

- Seeking out and facilitating the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- Inviting input from participants in designing the process.
- Providing participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- Communicating to participants how their input affected the final decision or outcome.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Community development is an integral part of successful community engagement. The following principles are essential to community development:

- **Increasing citizens' knowledge** about their community and/or the issue they are seeking to address.
- Encouraging citizens to **co-create additional knowledge** and understanding.
- **Using that knowledge to improve** the community or address the identified problem.
- **Creating ongoing future opportunities** for citizens to engage each other.
- Ensuring that these opportunities and effective communications becomes a **regular and on-going** component of the process.

BEST PRACTICES

A number of organisations and scholars have identified best practices that are followed by effective community engagement practitioners. In practice, these principles, and others, are applied in a variety of ways depending on the community or issue.

1. **Careful Planning and Preparation.** Through adequate and inclusive planning ensure that the design, organisation, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

2. **Inclusion and Demographic Diversity.** Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.

3. **Collaboration and Shared Purpose.** Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.

4. **Openness and Learning.** Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined assumptions, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate community engagement activities for effectiveness.

5. **Transparency and Trust.** Be clear and open about the process and goals, and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, views and ideas expressed.

6. **Impact and Action.** Ensure each engagement effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.

7. **Sustained Engagement and Participatory Culture.** Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality community engagement.

Source: *National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD), International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), and the Co-Intelligence Institute*, 2009. “Core Principles for Public Engagement.” http://ncdd.org/rc/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/PEPfinal-expanded.pdf

BUILDING TRUST

While there are a number of keys to building trust within any group, it's important to realise that the intention to create an authentic and transparent process should permeate every aspect of your engagement program.

Effective communication. This includes before, throughout, and following your formal engagement efforts. The more citizens and communities understand the process, the goals and intended outcomes, have access to the information they need to make an informed decision (including each other's perspectives), and their role(s) and stake in the process and issue, the more trust your engagement efforts will engender.

Respect. While this sounds obvious, it is absolutely essential that the tone, content, and facilitation of your engagement efforts genuinely respects the input of all participants or members – even if it's sometimes difficult.

Transparency of processes. Your engagement efforts should be clear and well-understood by all stake-holders, devoid of 'hidden' or alternative agendas (personal, political, or informational), and honest about the role and influence citizens will have in either the decision-making or implementation of solutions. **Many community engagement efforts fail in this regard.**

Share information widely. Effective engagement and trust requires that everyone involved is working from a common understanding of the issue and each other's' perspectives. If participants or residents feel that information is only shared with some members or does not do justice to all perspectives on an issue, you are very unlikely to be able to create the trust you need for effective or sustainable engagement.

Engage stakeholders in meaningful ways. Although closely related to respect, stakeholders will show greater trust in the engagement efforts that account for their perspectives, recognise their contributions, and make use of their skills.

PRACTICE TIP

Building trust is a core objective for best practice engagement. Effective community engagement efforts employ a range of tools and strategies that ensure community members and stakeholders can actively participate and contribute meaningfully to the process. Effective engagement facilitators place a premium on fostering and enhancing trust as a critical element in long-term, sustainable engagement and effective governance.

FACTORS THAT ERODE TRUST

Several factors contribute to a decline in trust – many of which highlight issues that an effective engagement process can be designed to anticipate and/or address. These include:

- **Perceptions of bias of those convening or facilitating the process or in the information available**
- **Limited engagement with, or understanding of the processes and expectations of engagement**
- **Political polarisation and reliance on pre-conceived perceptions**
- **Increased distance between professionals and citizens as governance processes and activities become increasingly specialised and complex.**

(Adapted from Matthews, "Connections 2008: Focus on Communities", Kettering Foundation, 2008 https://www.kettering.org/wp-content/uploads/Connections_2008.pdf).

CLARIFY, DEFINE AND ANALYSE THE ISSUE

Community engagement often requires problem-solving skills. Clarifying the problem is an important step to ensure that engagement efforts result in more sustainable solutions and avoid adding to the problem through unintended consequences.

PRACTICE TIP

Taking the time to carefully define the issue is critical to your long-term engagement success. While there are few 'magic formulas' it's important to make the appropriate distinction between the problem and its root causes. This will help you design your process.

CLARIFY THE PROBLEM

Begin by identifying the problem and listing those things you know about the problem. For example if you are trying to address "a lack of landholders participating in collective control efforts", list all the information you know about the problem. Expand on what is known about the problem by asking other people what they think about this problem. Information is critical when defining a problem. For example, if you are working to increase participation in a collective pest control effort, it would be useful to know:

- How many people are actively participating?
- Who are the community members that are absent?
- Why are they absent?

Think about the additional information that would help you better understand the problem you are working on. Collect several types of information about the problem from a number of sources including other organisations working on the problem, news articles, scientific publications, government reports, conversations with local leaders, people that are impacted by the problem, and the general public. What you hear or read will fall into one of the following categories:

- Facts (there are a fixed number of people who always participate)
- Inferences (people who don't participate are uninformed about the collective effort)
- Speculation (if they had better information they would join the effort)
- Opinion (some people just don't want to take action because they are lazy).

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

The information collected and generated when clarifying the problem will help you draft a problem statement, which is a **comprehensive definition of the problem**.

Well written problem statements follow two general principles:

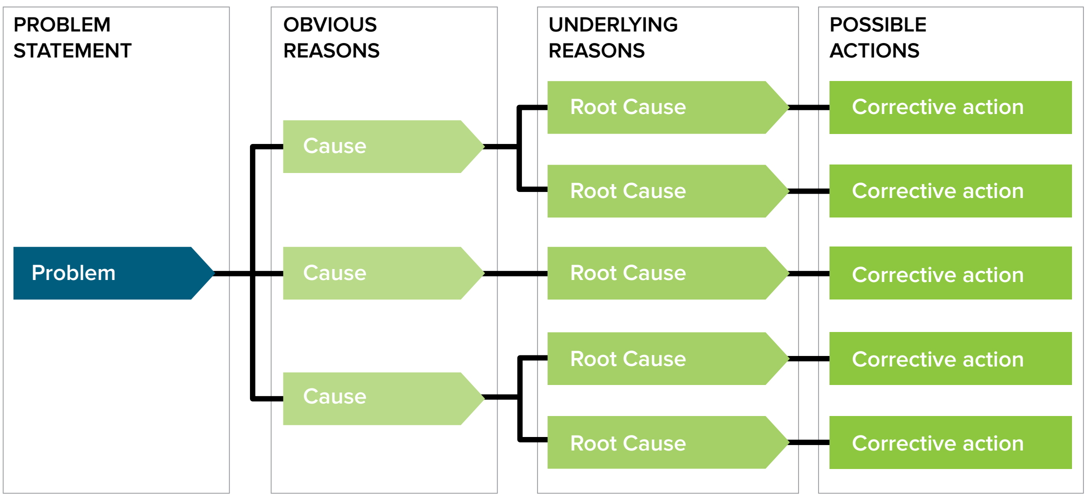
1. They define the problem in terms of **needs**, not solutions. If you define the problem in terms of possible solutions, you are closing the door to other, possibly more effective solutions. A problem defined as "There are community members who have yet to be engaged in our collective effort" leaves more space for possible solutions than "We need to send out fines for non-participation" or "We have to set up a website."

2. They define the problem to reflect **everyone's** perspective and avoid assigning blame for the problem. This is especially important if different groups or people with a history of bad relations or competing interests need to work to together to solve the problem.

ANALYSE THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

The next step in defining the issue or problem is to better understand the basic reasons behind the problem or issue you are trying to address. These underlying reasons are defined as root causes.

Taking action without identifying what factors contribute to the problem can result in misdirected efforts and wasted time and resources. By working with the community to thoroughly study the cause of the problem, you can build ownership, understand it better, and generate motivation to deal with it.



This flow chart illustrates the steps of problem clarification, definition and analysis.

PRACTICE TIP

THE 'BUT WHY?' TECHNIQUE

The "but why?" technique is one method used to identify the root causes underlying issues. This technique examines the problem by asking questions to identify the cause of the problem. Start by reading each problem and cause and asking "but why?" Continue asking the "but why?" question until you reach the root of the problem. This technique will help uncover the individual and social factors that are causing the problem:

- **Individual** factors could provide targets of change for your initiative, such as levels of knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and behaviour.
- Do people need more knowledge about the issue, problem or project?
- Do certain segments of the population need to learn skills to decrease the impact of the issue or problem?
- **Social** factors can also be identified. For example, it could help determine why a certain neighbourhood seems to have a higher rate of a specific problem. These social causes divide into three main sub-groups:
- Cultural factors, such as customs, beliefs, and values;
- Economic factors, such as money, land, and resources;
- Political factors, such as decision-making power.

The 'but why?' technique is best used within a group setting to brainstorm possible causes of the problem or issue. This group should be comprised of people who are affected by the problem and people who are in a position to contribute to solutions to the problem or issue. The broader the representation in the group, the more likely the true root causes will be identified.

ENGAGEMENT GOALS

Engagement goals reflect the **reason** for engaging citizens and communities. This section introduces the five primary engagement goals: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering.

IAP2's PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

Public has increasing impact on decision				
Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has designed the 'Spectrum of Public Participation' which is useful for defining the public's role in a participation process. In essence, the public has increasing impact on the decision-making process as the engagement goal moves up the spectrum.
Source: http://www.iap2.org/?page=pillars

PRACTICE TIP

Understanding these goals helps you assess the level(s) of engagement that's most appropriate for the issue you are working on. It is important to recognise the link between the engagement goal and the promise that is inherent in these goals, to avoid breaking trust and under-mining the success of the engagement effort overall.

INFORM

Informing is the simplest and most common engagement goal. Informing is generally one-way and primarily involves communicating information about an issue, decision, or process to citizens. Informing stakeholders, by itself, is not effective engagement because it does not allow the *exchange* of ideas, discussion, dialogue or deliberation.

Tools used to **inform** citizens include:

- **Fact Sheets** – printed materials that are widely distributed in print and electronically.
- **Websites** – increases your ability to reach a wide range of stakeholders
- **Open houses** – presentations, information sessions etc.
- **Public meetings** – where limited input from stakeholders is allowed
- **Public hearings** – where information is provided and an opportunity exists to voice concern but little or no discussion or dialogue occurs
- **Print, electronic media and social media communic**ation – newspaper, radio, TV, email, etc.

CONSULT

The second level of engagement is community **consultation** – creating a mechanism to gather input on the issue, problem, or process that is under consideration.

Depending on the issue, the objective(s) for this goal may be to elicit opinions, perspectives, ideas, underlying values, solutions, or priorities. Regardless of the approach, you should strive to gain as much feedback from affected citizens and stakeholders as possible.

Tools for **consulting** include both formal and informal strategies:

- Talking to a range of community members – e.g. Interviews, focus groups, online forums, community meetings.
- Systematically collecting relevant information – e.g. Surveys, workshops, document review, brainstorming activities.

PRACTICE TIP

When you are collecting information about the issue of concern, it can be helpful to keep a record of your personal and professional reaction to what you are hearing. This is part of a 'reflective practice' that helps you avoid bias and encourages the capacity for critical thinking about the problem.

INVOLVE

Involve goals reflect a commitment to work directly with the public **throughout the process** to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered. Some tools to **involve** citizens are:

- **Citizen panels** – focus primarily on the decision-making process and are generally conducted within small groups. The panels are usually conducted over the span of several days and include randomly selected participants. The participants on the panel generally deliberate a specific issue and present recommendations on how to address the issue.

- **Deliberative polling** – combines deliberation in small group discussions with scientific random sampling to provide public consultation for public policy and for electoral issues. Members of a random sample are polled, and then some members of the sample are invited to gather to discuss the issues after they have examined balanced briefing materials.

COLLABORATE

Collaborate is the fourth goal on the engagement spectrum. Collaboration goals indicate you will partner with the public in each aspect of the decision being considered, including the development of alternatives and the identification of a preferred solution. Tools designed to help you achieve **collaboration** include:

- **Study circles** –can be used to foster collaboration through exploration, deliberation and collective action. Study circles bring together people of various socioeconomic classes and ethnicities to engage in dialogue and deliberation in order to brainstorm potential solutions for the issue at hand. The series of dialogues take place over time and are meant to spur the entire group to reach a collective decision and seek to have action taken on the decision.

- **Community task force** – can be used to engage citizens in discussion on a particular issue. The group should be relatively small and consist of local volunteers who are involved in or affected by the issue. The task force can participate in a community project in a variety of ways including identifying the issue, collecting information, brainstorming solutions/ alternatives, creating an action plan, and implementing the action plan.

- **Electronic methods** – Increasing numbers of businesses, households, and organisations have access to the internet and email. Online access allows you to engage a larger portion of the public in discussions concerning community issues, through discussion forums, online polls and Q&A sessions.

EMPOWER

Empowerment refers to placing either the decision-making authority or the responsibility for implementing a particular solution in the hands of stakeholders participating in the engagement process.

- A 'Citizen Jury' is one tool that can be used to attain this goal through a process that brings together a microcosm of the public, having them attend hearings where they learn about the issue, sessions where the jury members deliberate about what they learned during the hearings and finally issue recommendations for addressing the issue.

STAKEHOLDERS

Engagement processes revolve around stakeholders. Stakeholders are identified as individuals or groups that a) Can influence the outcome of a project, program or initiative, and b) Who will be affected by the project, program or initiative.

PRACTICE TIP

These are only some of the possible tools you might use to achieve your engagement goals. There are many excellent resources which can help you find the best tool for your need (check our resource list for suggestions). Most importantly, these tools can be adapted to suit the scale of the engagement effort or target community.

IDENTIFYING AND ANALYSING STAKEHOLDERS

Identifying stakeholders is a critical aspect of a community engagement process. Stakeholders are more than potential funders and official decision-makers. Stakeholders are also the groups and individuals that are affected by the project or issue that is being addressed.

It is best to be as inclusive as possible when identifying stake-holders. Consider government officials, decision makers, funders, non-profit organisations, civic organisations, consultants, business leaders, citizens and residents. Pay special attention to those who may be under-represented but are impacted by the issue or project such as minority groups, women, youth, seniors, immigrants, and low-income residents. Information gathered should include:

- The name of individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups
- Key individuals that represent stakeholder groups
- How the stakeholders might affect or be affected by the project or initiative
- How best to communicate with each of the stakeholder groups
- Barriers that might limit stakeholder's participation.

STEP 1
Stakeholders that can affect the outcome

Start by identifying the stakeholder groups (formal and non-formal) and individuals that can affect the implementation of the project or may influence possible solutions. Include local decision makers, government agencies, non-profits and activist organisations. Identify groups, organisations and individuals that may oppose the project or initiative as well as those that will likely support the project or initiative. If at all possible identify an individual that has a leadership role in each stake-holder group. It is good practice to include individuals on this list that aren't affiliated with any particular organisation but who have influence and power to affect outcome of the project or initiative.

STEP 2
Stakeholders affected by the outcome

Identify stakeholder groups and individuals that could be positively or negatively impacted by the project or issue being addressed. For example, a wild dog control project would affect current residents and property owners in the neighbourhood. The project would reduce wild dog numbers and be of benefit for livestock farmers, but some residents may be concerned that domestic dogs would be at risk. Resident and non-resident property owners may be influenced by concerns about the humane treatment of animals. Or a local government may decide to withhold permits for baiting.

Special attention should be paid to stakeholders that may be under-represented but will still be impacted by the issue or project. These stakeholders might include minority groups, women, youth, seniors, immigrants, and low-income residents. It is also important to identify how each stakeholder or stakeholder group might be affected by the project or initiative. If at all possible identify individuals that represent or have a leadership role in each stakeholder group.

STEP 3
Matching stakeholders to engagement goals

Matching stakeholders to engagement goals is necessary to ensure you are involving stakeholders appropriately.

- **Inform**: one-way communication primarily designed to provide information about an issue
- **Consult**: gather input, opinions, and ideas on the issue or process from the stakeholders
- **Involve**: include stakeholder's opinions and ideas into the proposed solutions
- **Collaborate**: engage stakeholders in complex problem-solving processes through dialogue and deliberation
- **Empower**: foster decision-making authority or responsibility for implementing a solution to stakeholders

STEP 4
Communicating with stakeholders

It is good practice to develop a communication strategy for your engagement efforts. Communication methods used throughout the engagement process range from mass communication to one-on-one communication. The communication strategy should include the following information:

- The method(s) of communication that will be use to communicate with stakeholders
- A communication calendar
- The type(s) of information to be communicated
- An evaluation plan to document what worked and what did not so you can improve.

BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PLAN

An effective, on-going, and well-planned communications plan is critical to ensuring you maintain the relationships, information flows, and momentum you are establishing within your engagement efforts. The major steps are outlined as follows.

DETERMINE YOUR GOALS AND PURPOSES

Communication objectives should be clearly defined, detailed, achievable, and measurable. You will also want to distinguish between internal and external communications objectives. Questions to consider include:

- What is the overall goal you want to achieve?
- What are the tangible outcomes you hope to achieve?
- Why do you want to communicate with the audience? Are you hoping to inform, persuade, create action or increase involvement?

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

Identifying your target audiences is a critical step in your overall communication efforts. It is important to remember that you are likely to have a number of different audiences – each of whom may prefer different types of information and likely have differing preferences for how they receive that information. You will also want to consider the positions and interests of your audience and how that may affect your plans. Questions to consider include:

- What are the prior knowledge levels, attitudes, and behaviours of each audience as it relates to your project?
- What are the barriers to communication for each stakeholder group?
- What are some of the major characteristics (e.g. education, internet access/comfort, geographic location, available time, etc.) of each audience? How will you use these characteristics to help guide your communication efforts?

DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE

Messages are the statements that will convey **critical pieces of information**. Underlying themes and key talking points will help guide what information you want to relay. They also deliver important information about the issue and compel target audiences to think, feel, or act. You will be well-served to craft your messages based on the interest of audiences, ensure they are concise and understandable, and be sure they summarise the main things that important to you about your project. It is also important to ensure that everyone in your organisation is providing the same set of messages. Questions you may want to consider include:

- What are the most critical pieces of information about your program and processes? How will they affect the audience?
- What specific responses do you want from your audience – simply to be more informed, to take specific action, or to get more involved?

DECIDE WHICH METHODS ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE

There are countless methods and venues for communicating your messages. Selection of the most effective method(s) will depend on the types of information you want to convey, what your audiences most want to know, and how they are likely to prefer to access your information. Accordingly your 'communication channels' are very likely to be different for each audience. Questions you may want to consider include

- Where does your audience usually get their information from?
- Through what delivery methods is your audience most likely to give you attention?
- Will you need to tailor your messages differently for different media?
- Do you have the experience and skills to deliver your messages effectively?

IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN

Now that you have identified your goals, target audiences, messages, and delivery methods it's now time to implement your plan. Determine when to launch your communication and other key dates and deadlines. Contact those who will help you get your message out. Ensure that all those involved know their role in the project. Questions you may want to consider include:

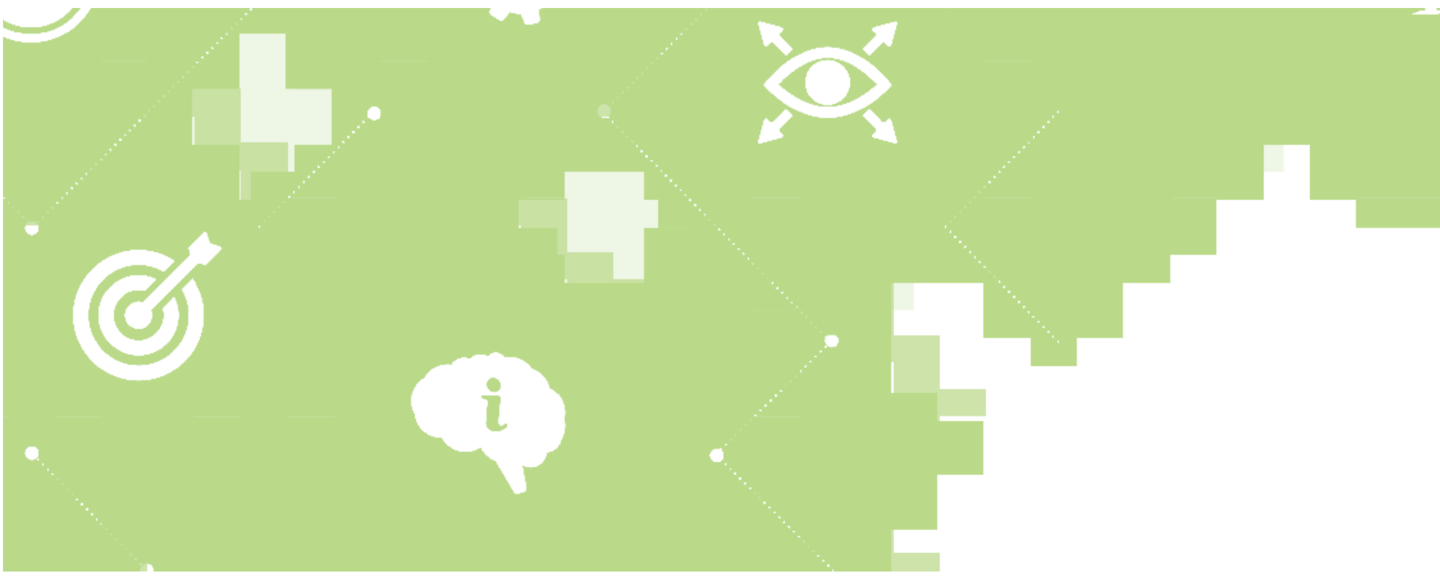
- What timing and frequency of your messages will be most effective and for whom? Will this differ for different methods or audiences?
- Who will be responsible within your organisation for ensuring messages are developed and delivered in a timely, effective, and professional manner?
- Have you allocated, and can you acquire adequate resources (e.g. financial, time, or expertise) to ensure your efforts are successful?

EVALUATE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS

Ideally you should assess the effectiveness of your communication strategy to make improvements or adjust strategies. Questions to consider include:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of your communication efforts to date?
- Are you reaching those you had intended? Are they responding in ways you had hoped? Why or why not?
- Have their perspectives or perceptions of your organization or the issues you are working changed?
- Are changes to your strategy required either now or in the near future?

(See part 2 for more detail about evaluation)



PART 2

IMPLEMENTING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Taking the time to carefully frame the issue for discussion in community engagement efforts is critical to successful community engagement. How the issue is framed sets the tone for the effort, establishes the range and depth of the dialogue that will be fostered, and will greatly influence the outcome of the entire effort.

PRACTICE TIP

A frame focuses attention on a particular way of seeing the 'problem'. When we 'frame' a picture, we impose boundaries that might limit our ability to see other possibilities. Although 'framing' may exclude alternative viewpoints, 're-framing' can be used to invite different interpretations. Understanding the power of framing is useful for practitioners who seek to understand the issue from a range of perspectives.

FRAMING THE ISSUE: MOVE FROM POSITIONS TO INTERESTS

Reframing can bring diverse interests to the table as well as focus discussions on a particular issue to move people away from presupposed positions and toward a common set of interests.

AVOID INVITING CONFLICT

How the issue or problem is framed will greatly influence the problem-solving environment in which your discussions take place – while creating as little conflict as possible. Differing perspectives are the key building blocks of your long-term success; the engagement goal, however, is to use these differences productively toward a solution and not allow them to erode trust or relationships.

INVITE SOLUTIONS

As a general rule, your framing and its subsequent discussion questions should focus on "How can we....?" rather than "Should we...?" types of questions. Avoid 'yes/no' dichotomous questions because they can stop dialogue and getting to common understandings.

GOALS OF YOUR FRAMING EFFORT

In general, you want to frame discussions in such a way as to:

- Move beyond debate and 'yes' or 'no' opinions
- Identify common concerns and values about the issue
- Guide the discussion toward options (or solutions) that meet these concerns and values
- Avoid presupposing one particular solution
- Focus on "how can we accomplish X while also accomplishing Y"?
- Assess 'advantages/ disadvantages' and/or 'benefits/risks'
- Assist participants to come to terms with choices as they 'work through' an issue.

GETTING SPECIFIC

Once you have a solid grasp on the complexities of the issue and the values and priorities of your participants, your issue frame should be shaped to draw out 'win/win' perspectives related to: **How can we do X while also accomplishing Y (and perhaps Z as well!)?** This allows you to recognise the range of legitimate interests around the issue while also seeking a solution.

Some examples of how to re-frame challenging issues include:

- Should unconventional gas development be banned or fostered?
  Reframed – How can we balance the economic benefits of natural gas development while protecting our vital environmental assets?
- Should the country support an agricultural land preservation program?
  Reframed – What are our best and most cost-effective options for preserving agricultural land in the country?
- Should landholders be forced to undertake invasive species control?
  Reframed – How can we increase landholder cooperation while minimising legal interventions?

FACILITATION – CORE VALUES AND DIMENSIONS

A facilitator provides leadership by establishing processes that maximise the opportunity for participant input and the co-creation of knowledge within the group. A facilitator provides the methods and means that enable groups and individuals to explore issues and craft solutions to complex issues facing their community, **without necessarily being a subject matter expert.**

Rather than being a player, a community engagement facilitator acts more like a referee. The facilitator watches the action during meetings and between meetings. They help participants and stakeholders communicate with each other and the community at large. They help work through conflicts surrounding the problem. Most importantly, the facilitator helps affected community members define and reach their goals by working together.

Community engagement facilitators focus on three core dimensions:

1. The substance or content of the issue or project
2. Stakeholder relationships
3. The processes that shape the engagement effort.

PRACTICE TIP

Facilitators need to balance time, the degree of uncertainty surrounding the issue or project and the maturity of the organisation or group to find the best possible tool that will enable participants to make effective decisions and reach lasting agreements and commitments. *Facilitator training* is a useful way to build your confidence and skills and is recommended for those working directly with affected communities.

CORE VALUES

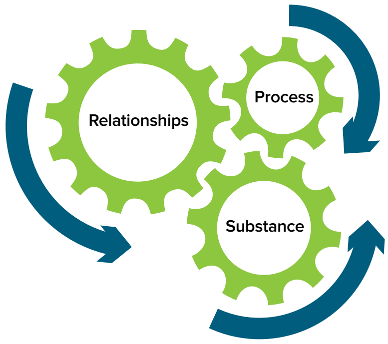
Effective facilitation is grounded by core values that set the stage for active participation of participants. These core values provide the community engagement practitioner with the foundation for, and a guide to, **best practice facilitation**.

- *Foster free and informed choice.* Participants' input, decision making, and trust are all enhanced in an environment free of manipulation, power imbalances, or coercion. Be honest about how decisions will be made and how participant input will be taken into account and used to make the final decision(s) about the solution or project being considered. Be careful to **maintain commitment to this principle throughout the entire process**.
- *Take responsibility*. All participants should be aware of and take responsibility for the success of the overall effort—both the processes and outcomes. Facilitators need to create an environment that **encourages everyone to take an active role** in all aspects of the process.
- *Foster compassion and respect*. **All participants deserve to be heard** and make their contribution to make to both the process and outcome. Achieving this may be the most difficult aspect of a facilitator's job, especially in circumstances where individual participants don't adhere to this critical core value.
- *Insist on valid information*. **Valid, relevant, and up-to-date information**, free of real or perceived bias, is an essential ingredient for best practice facilitation. This enables participants to base discussions and decisions on pertinent facts, rather than perceptions or opinions that can diminish both the quality of relationships and the effectiveness of discussions.

The table looks at the distinctions between content and process.

Content (the 'what')	Process (the 'how')
Topics for discussion	Discussion methods and meeting procedures
Tasks to be accomplished	How relationships are maintained
Problems being addressed	Tool being used
Decisions being made	Ground rules and norms
Agenda items	Group dynamics
Goals	Visioning

DIMENSIONS OF FACILITATION



Community engagement facilitators focus on three dimensions: the substance or content surrounding the issue or project; relationships between stakeholders; and the processes that structure the engagement effort.

Content is the substance of the issue being discussed. This includes defining the problem, its causes, the relevant information on all sides of the issue; the 'technical' aspects of the issue, the relevant jurisdictions, the regulations and authorities involved; the alternatives and consequences of the choices to be made and the resulting decisions.

Relationships refer to fostering, at every opportunity possible, a solid foundation of trust, common understanding and vision, and inter-relationships with all those involved in the engagement process. Building relationships is an important 'soft' skill that facilitators need to take into account. This involves ensuring all interests are respected and given due consideration, communication is effective and on-going, and group processes and conflict are managed effectively.

Process concerns are focused on how your engagement effort is structured to ensure you reach your engagement goals. Process includes the discussion methods, procedures, meeting format, and facilitation techniques. Process also includes the style of the interaction (e.g. group discussion or panel discussion), the group dynamics and the time and location of the event. **Facilitators pay attention to process concerns to ensure all participants contribute to the outcome of the meeting or activity.**

Community engagement facilitators commonly have a deep understanding about the issue or problem around which they are facilitating. The facilitator will likely have an opinion about the decision or direction the group should take to address a problem. Effective facilitators use their understanding of the issue, meeting purpose and expected outcomes along with process skills and tools, to help the groups they are working with engage in effective dialogue, understand the information and decisions they are considering and develop plans for group action.

PRACTICE TIP

The facilitator is often seen as the meeting leader, and in fact does provide process leadership. However, the facilitator should stay as neutral as possible on content. The goal is to actively manage the process in order to foster the co-creation of knowledge and a group-centred exploration of ideas and solutions.

FACILITATION DILEMMAS AND TOOLS

Effective engagement efforts often require lots of meetings. These meetings have many different goals including building relationships, sharing information, exploring options, solutions, values and perspectives. Having a set of idea-generation and idea-narrowing tools in your facilitation 'toolkit' (your back pocket) will help you utilise everyone's time as efficiently as possible – and ensure that you've gathered the full range of relevant ideas from your participants.

SYMPTOMS, CAUSES AND CURES OF POOR DECISIONS

Poor quality decisions can be avoided through effective planning and facilitation.

Symptom #1 – Aimless, drifting, and random discussions. The same topic is repeatedly covered with little or no resolution. **This is usually caused by no (or an inadequate) plan or process for approaching a decision**.

Symptom #2 – The group uses voting on important items where total buy-in is important but uses consensus to decide trivial matters. This generally occurs when the group **hasn't fully considered that range of decision making tools available to them** to determine the most effective for its current circumstances.

Symptom #3 – The group always seems to run out of time just when important decisions come to the table. In this case **time isn't monitored or managed effectively or there is no detailed agenda** developed for ensuring enough time is allowed for decision-making

Symptom #4 – When an important item is on the table members get heated and argumentative. Few members are listening and most are pushing their own agenda or perspective. Often in these cases a few members are dominating, unconcerned that others are silent. This is an issue of **poorly developed group interaction skills and behavioural expectations** and requires strong facilitation.

Symptom #5 – After a lengthy discussion it becomes apparent that everyone is operating on a slightly different set of assumptions about the problem, its implications, the range of alternatives and consequences, or the solutions. **This is caused by a failure to check assumptions along the way.** Ensuring that probing questions are asked to discern underlying values and assumption is the best way to address this concern. These could be related to the situation as well as the organisation or the

PRACTICE TIP

Some idea generation tools for facilitators include:

- Brain storming
- Visioning
- Force field analysis
- Root cause analysis

Some idea narrowing tools for facilitators include:

- Decision grids
- Ranking processes

A detailed list of these tools and how to use them is included in the appendix.

person. Checking in with the group to clarify or validate underlying assumptions on a regular basis is a critical part of any discussion.

Symptom #6 – In spite of the fact that the discussions have come to little or no resolution, **no one takes action to maintain momentum and keep things on track.** This can often be solved by someone checking in with the group or calling a 'time out' to take stock and regroup.

DECISION-MAKING OPTIONS

As a facilitator, you have **at least** six distinct decision making methods available to you. Each has benefits and challenges.

OPTION 1
Spontaneous Agreement

This happens only occasionally when there is a solution that is favoured by everyone and there is complete agreement among participants. Usually happens more or less automatically and issues are relatively trivial.

Benefits: Fast, easy, unifying
Challenges: Too fast, lack of discussion
Best used: When full discussion isn't critical, trivial issues.

OPTION 2
One person decides

This occurs when the group decides that it best serves them to have one person decide on behalf of the group. While this may sound undemocratic, it can be useful in some circumstances. It can lead to faster decisions and more efficient resolution for many issues particularly if this person has been diligent about gathering advice and input.

Benefits: Can be fast, clear accountability
Challenges: Lack of input, low buy-in, no synergy
Uses: When one person is the expert or an individual is willing and capable of taking on this role.

OPTION 3
Compromise

This is often appropriate when there are two or more distinct options and members are strongly polarised. A middle position is then sought that can incorporate ideas from both sides.

Benefits: Good discussion, creates a solution
Challenges: Can be adversarial, win/lose, divides the group
Uses: When positions are polarised and consensus is improbable.

OPTION 4
Multi-voting

This is a priority setting tool that is useful for making decisions when the groups has a lengthy set of options and needs to rank order those options based on an established set of criteria.

Benefits: Systematic, objective, participative, feels like a win
Challenges: Limits dialogue, influenced choices, real priorities may not surface
Uses: To sort or prioritise a long list of options.

OPTION 5
Majority vote

This involves asking members to choose the option they favour once clear choices have been identified. The quality of voting is always enhanced if there has been adequate time to consider all ideas and considerations prior to voting.

Benefits: Fast, high quality if paired with dialogue, clear outcome
Challenges: May be too fast, winners and losers, limited dialogue as possibility, influenced choices
Uses: Trivial matter, when there are clear options, if division in the group is okay with everyone.

OPTION 6
Consensus Building

This involves everyone clearly understanding the situation or problem, analysing all relevant facts and perspectives and then jointly developing solutions that represent the whole group's best thinking about the optimal decision.

Benefits: Collaborative, systematic, participative, discussion oriented, encourages commitment
Challenges: Takes time, requires good data and member skills
Uses: Important issues, when total buy-in matters.

PRACTICE TIP

WORKING TOWARDS CONSENSUS

In addition to being the first choice in many decision-making environments, facilitators are constantly building consensus in almost everything they do. Consensus means reaching unanimous agreement on a particular course of action or decisions.

Getting to consensus might require:

- Summarising a complex set of ideas to the satisfaction of group members
- Getting everyone's input into clearly identified goals and objectives
- Assessing underlying values and perspectives of all group members
- Asking clarifying questions to explore all ideas, concerns, and options
- Gathering input related to all data and information relevant to the discussion and decision to be made
- Linking member's ideas together so that their perspectives are incorporated in discussions and decisions
- Agreeing upon a decision making method for use in the final decision.
- Regardless of whether consensus is being used formally to reach a decision on a specific issue, or informally as an ongoing facilitation technique, you'll know your group is working consensually when:
- Lots of ideas are being shared
- People's feelings and values are openly explored
- Everyone is heard and respected
- There's active listening and paraphrasing to clarify ideas and ideas are built on by other members
- No one is trying to push pre-determined solutions – instead there is an open and objective question for new options and solutions
- When the final decision is reached, people feel satisfied that they were part of the decision
- Everyone feels adequately consulted and involved to the extent that **even when the final decision isn't the one they would have chosen on their own, they can readily accept it.**

FACILITATION:
MEETING MANAGEMENT

Meeting preparation is a key element of productive meetings. Below are three steps to consider to ensure the meetings you facilitate throughout your engagement process are productive and participants feel their time has been well spent.

BUILDING AN AGENDA

A well thought-out agenda is an important tool for a successful meeting. The agenda should state the meeting's objective or purpose and include an outline of the topics to be discussed during the meeting.

Tougher topics should either be placed at the beginning or the end of the agenda. Depending on the group dynamic, attendees may feel refreshed and eager to participate in the beginning; at the end, members may be tired and unwilling to participate. Conversely, in the beginning, some attendees may be timid and uncomfortable about sharing with the group. **Determine how your group interacts before you finalise your agenda to avoid either of these barriers to participation.** Begin and end with a "unifying note" or summary so the group starts and ends feeling as if they are a part of an effective discussion with a clear purpose.

PRACTICE TIP

The agenda is a guide to help keep both the facilitator and participants on task.

The agenda should include the following:

- **A short, simple statement of the meeting purpose or objective**
- **A list of topics to be discussed and the names of individuals who will be responsible for presenting or leading discussion for each topic**
- **A brief statement about why each topic is being discussed and its importance to those attending**
- **The time allotted for each topic**
- **Basic information relevant to the topic and other necessary background information**
- **Important deadlines and dates to highlight what needs to be done and the subsequent timeline.**
- **Key questions for attendees to consider before the meeting to help guide facilitation.**

PRACTICE TIP

It can be helpful to develop two separate agendas: one for the facilitator that is in depth and detailed, and another outline version for participants to refer to during the meeting. A copy of the outline agenda should be sent to participants before the meeting, and copies should be available as a hand out prior to starting the meeting.

MEETING LOGISTICS

It is the facilitator's responsibility to prepare for the meeting. Preparation includes:

- Contacting members and stakeholders a few days prior to the meeting to remind them of the meeting time, date, and location.
- Determining if the facility is suitable for everyone:
- Are there ramps or elevators to ease access for physically challenged individuals?
- Are there any physical barriers to entry at the location?
- Ensure arrangements are made for refreshments, pens, pencils, name tags, extra copies of the agenda, etc.
- Do you need meeting aids such as a white board or easel in the room?
- Is there a computer, a projector, and a screen available if needed? Do you know how to use it properly? If not, make sure to contact someone to help you set it up or teach you to use it before the meeting.
- Issue the invitation – identify your target audience.
- If you intend to advertise the meeting, how will you communicate with prospective participants? Consider emails, posts on blogs, posters in local community centers, newspaper ads, or any method that is likely to attract the attention of your target audience.

PREPARING TO FACILITATE A MEETING

Before the meeting, run through these questions:

- Have you clearly defined the meeting purposes and objectives?

- Determine your own role during the meeting. Consider how your role might affect your facilitation. Will you be the:
  - Facilitator but not a member of the group?
  - Facilitator and a leader or member of the group?

- Identify who will fill the following roles during the meeting:
  - Registration and/or attendance recorder
  - Note taker
  - Arrange for equipment
  - Arrange for refreshments
  - Time keeper

- Determine and arrange for the appropriate room set-up. Classroom style may be appropriate if the purpose of the meeting is to present information. Seating participants around tables or in a circle will be more appropriate if the participants need to engage in discussion.

- Consider the nature and makeup of the group as a whole and its members individually.
  - Are there certain positions that members have that may act as a barrier to participation? How will you mitigate these?
  - Have you considered a team-building exercise to 'break the ice' and allow each member to become comfortable with the group?
  - Have you considered the organisational context within the group and how might it affect the success of your meeting?
  - Are there power imbalances in the group you will need to anticipate?

- Determine discussion methods and a style of interaction you will utilise.
  - Will it be run by a leader only, or is it wholly discussion based?
  - Do you have a strategy to promote discussion and deliberation rather than debate?

- Use a variety of media, graphics, types of discussion, etc. Remember, everyone works differently and some will not benefit from a wholly discussion-based meeting.
  - Have you considered using a variety of media in your facilitation to guide discussion and deliberation? (e.g. flip charts, projected note-taking, videos, handouts, etc.)

- Identify the decision-making method you intend to use during the meeting. These may include but are not limited to: majority rule, consensus, leader-driven, or consensus. You will want to make this clear at the beginning of the meeting to ensure everyone is working from the same set of expectations.

- If the group is expected to make a decision during the meeting, identify a decision-making method.

Develop a 'work plan' so that decisions made during the meeting will be implemented by identified individuals before the next meeting, or whatever deadline is chosen. Make sure to include this in a follow-up email to remind participants of their commitments prior to the next meeting

- Do you have a "work plan" to implement decisions made during the meeting?
- Have you identified individuals that are willing to take action from the meeting?

Review the agenda with a critical eye to ensure all topics are in-line with the meeting purpose and objectives.

FACILITATING THE MEETING – A CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

The facilitator's job during the meeting is to promote discussion, ensure an amiable environment and manage any tension between participants in order to help achieve the meeting purpose or the group's goal.

The following checklist will help you facilitate effective communication and active participation of meeting participants.

Review#1 – Review the agenda with the participants at the beginning of the meeting and ask if any items are missing. Participants should already be aware of what is on the agenda, as you should have already sent it out prior to the meeting. **Remember to bring extra copies with you** for those who forgot theirs or for new members of the group.

- Restate decisions, issues, or disagreements that took place at the last meeting to better enable group members to work towards a solution.

Review#2 – Review the meeting purpose and objectives and seek agreement from the participants on the objectives. This helps **focus the meeting, improves efficiency, and creates a concrete measure of success.**

PRACTICE TIP

Discussion and deliberation focuses on collaborating to improve and understand the position of others in order to develop a solution to a problem. Debate focuses on the differences between beliefs and values which can cause controversy and unwillingness to participate.

Ground rules – Establish ground rules that respect individual rights and responsibilities. This builds trust among participants and leads to a cohesive group discussion.

Agenda – Summarise how the agenda items are important to meeting important dates and deadlines

Attendance – Take attendance of participants that are present, if appropriate. This way, members of the group who attend all meetings and participate can voice their opinion and can be recognised for their service and dedication.

Recognition – Recognise all participants serving as note taker, time keeper, etc.

PRACTICE TIP

Realistically, a solution may not be achievable during the first few meetings. The facilitator must be patient and active during the entirety of the meeting to guide participants towards a long-term and viable solution.

☑ **Reflection** – Take notes on feelings, ideas, thoughts, solutions, decisions, questions, and observations that are observed throughout the meeting.

- These notes are in addition to those taken by the “secretary” (if you have one) and document your own thoughts and insights about the **process** of the meeting.

☑ **Feedback** – Encourage feedback on: the agenda, the discussion topics during the meeting, the plan for each participant between meetings, deadlines, etc.

☑ **Review#3** – Review all decisions made during the meeting, any tasks that need to be accomplished before the next meeting, and the people responsible for the tasks prior to ending the meeting.

AFTER THE MEETING

After the meeting, the facilitator is responsible for recapping the events and decisions of the meeting. Completing the following tasks within a week or two of the meeting ensures the actions taken at the meeting are recorded and that participants are able to effectively participate in future meetings.

For example:

- Send a recap email to participants thanking them for attending the meeting.
- Send a thank-you note or email to any guest speakers soon after your meeting concludes

Consider:

- Did we accomplish the goals and objectives we set for the meeting?
- What can I do to improve for the next meeting?
- What worked well? What didn’t work well?
- What remains to be completed for the next meeting?

PRACTICE TIP

- **Remember to focus on issues and interests, not positions or personalities of individual attendees**
- **Encourage participation from all members and attendees during the entire meeting. If you notice someone is not participating, make sure to ask for their opinion if they are willing to speak.**
- **Stay neutral during the discussion.**
- **Make careful observations and pay attention to what attendees are saying.**
- **Make sure everyone in the group is on the same page, understands their roles, and is following along with the discussion and the overall engagement process.**
- **Respect time boundaries set forth in the agenda for individual topics and do not overrun the meeting.**
- **Clarify how decisions are made, the outcomes of the meeting and the next steps.**

MANAGING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Understanding and managing conflict surrounding public issues is a challenge that most community engagement efforts encounter at one time or another. However, **not all conflict is detrimental to community engagement**. Creative or productive disagreement, managed effectively, can contribute to better long-term outcomes. The key is to manage it in ways that are productive and above all else, foster trust and build relationships.

WHY DO DIFFICULT ISSUES ARISE?

Conflict may have any number of origins. It is helpful to think about the 'behind the scenes' factors that may be affecting your engagement efforts:

- *Faulty or inconsistent communications* – between leaders and citizens as well as within communities themselves.
- *Competition for resources* – either real or perceived (e.g. fear that one group's gain means another's loss).
- *Value clashes* – community members view issues through the lens of their particular experiences and values – affecting their perceptions of the problem and any potential solutions.
- *Acceptance of change* – everyone 'comes to the table' with variable levels of comfort with change regardless of the merits or circumstances of the issue.
- *Poorly defined responsibilities and authority* –the cause and/or the responsibility for solutions is not well understood or agreed upon.
- *Need for recognition* – all community members appreciate being recognised as valuable and legitimate contributors. This is often overlooked in community engagement.
- *Power or status differences* – can frequently be the source of conflict and may or may not be immediately obvious.
- *Unresolved prior conflict or lack of trust* – legacy considerations that you may have to consider.

PRACTICE TIP

There are a number of other reasons why conflict may negative impact on engagement efforts. Some of these include when:

- Participants are **taken by surprise** about an issue or process
- **The stakes**, either real or perceived, ***are high***
- **An adversarial tone is** set by those leading the effort – and spreads to the affected community
- **It's what people are used to** – they have not been trained or had experience with other forms of dialogue and the development of solutions
- Participants feel there are **no better alternatives** to resolving the conflict or being heard.

PLANNING FOR AND MANAGING DIFFICULT ISSUES

Effectively managing difficult issues requires assessing both the current conditions 'on the ground', as well as designing processes that effectively address the technical, social, and economic realities that may affect outcomes.

Effectively assessing the situation is a key step in your planning process. At the most general level, you will want to ask a number of questions to understand the 'lay of the land'. These might include:

- What is the level of interest or concern?
- Who, and how many, may be affected by the outcomes of this process?
- Who are the relevant authorities and decision-makers?
- Are the relevant authorities committed to good-faith implementation of the outcomes?
- Do you have all the relevant information you need?

The following outline details, more specifically, the stages many issues generally go through. Being able to diagnose where your stakeholders are in relation to the issue at hand helps you understand what intervention options are most likely to be effective at that particular point.

DIAGNOSING DIFFICULT ISSUES: THE DECISION CYCLE

The best time to address a challenging situation is in the early stages when it may still be possible to establish some common ground in either understanding of the issue or other's perspectives.

- *Concern* – this is the earliest stage of the assessment and generally when the discussions are just beginning. Interventions at this stage of cycle might include **listening**, helping **clarify** the nature of the issue and providing technical and other **information.**

- *Involvement* – this is when community members are starting to get involved with the issue or are considering purposefully addressing it. It is useful to identify the level at which people are currently involved with the issue. Are they starting to form opinions or are they still assessing the problem? At this stage, assess what **additional information** might be useful.

- *Issues* – this is where perspectives and 'sides' are starting to emerge. At this point you may want to provide additional information, assess the degree of conflict, or **investigate underlying values** or other community or issue dynamics are at play. You will also start identifying potential solutions that are consistent with the values and perspectives being aired, while allowing space for any alternative views to emerge.

- *Alternatives* – this stage of the process is generally where the range of solutions begins to take shape and alternative solutions and ideas begin to emerge. **This can be a critical point in any conflict cycle.** Effective facilitation and fostering a **respectful discussion** of the merits of proposed solutions is key at this stage.

- *Consequences* – this is often where a 'deeper dive' into the implications and consequences of proposed solutions occurs. What are the long and short term costs and benefits of each of the main solutions that have been identified?

- *Choice* – this is generally where the process is approaching decision time and where ideally the issue has been effectively explored from as many perspectives as possible. **Effective decision-making processes are critical at this stage** to avoid alienating one or more stakeholder groups.

- *Implementation* –this occurs when it's time to take action. At this point it is critical to ensure that **everyone understands the process and reasoning** behind the decision and what steps will take place to implement it.
- *Evaluation* – the process has determined what success looks like and how to measure it. **More on this in Part 3 of the handbook.**

ALIGNMENT

A critical element in any effective engagement effort is ensuring that the processes, procedures and communications are all aligning and are consistent with the engagement goals. Community engagement efforts can falter because tensions between internal and external forces within either key organisations or community groups have not been adequately considered.

PRACTICE TIP

A good engagement plan will help you connect your engagement goals with the processes, procedures and communications that you will use. Engagement plans also help you communicate with internal and external stakeholders, which increases the likelihood of gaining important 'buy in' from all of those with a stake in the process.

INTERNAL ALIGNMENT

The first, and perhaps most obvious aspect of alignment relates to the procedures, policies, and communications within your organisation. If your group, organisation or government agency is undertaking a community engagement effort, the following questions should be explored:

- Are there policies, limitations on your authority or control, or internal decision-making procedures that you need to consider before beginning your engagement efforts? How do these alter the overall goals, issue identification, discussion questions, processes or promises you make to those participating in your engagement effort?
- Is everyone within your organisation – and more broadly across your engagement team – supportive of, and fully understanding of the goals, intentions, processes, and promises of your engagement effort? Are you all speaking from the same page? If not, what can you do to address this before it's too late? The last thing you want is for participants or members of the community getting mixed signals from your organisation.
- How can you best incorporate the input and deliberations into policies, procedures, or activities? Are there adjustments you can make to accommodate this new information? What strategies will you use to ensure you able to keep the promises you've made to the participants and members? And if not, how will you justify and communicate these decisions, both internally and externally?

PRACTICE TIP

If you are promising that the input you gather in your engagement efforts will be incorporated into the actions and decisions that follow, are there internal reasons or limitations to this promise? If there ARE internal limitations, you need to recognise them early on and be transparent about these from the outset. Better to investigate these issues rather than be blindsided by them later on, as this will diminish the trust and relationships you've been so carefully developing.

EXTERNAL ALIGNMENT

External alignment refers to the alignment of the engagement goals and promises with the policies, procedures, and communications of your external partners or stakeholders. If one or more key stakeholders are not likely to support an emerging solution to the issue, you may want to recalibrate either the processes and/or goals of your engagement effort. Questions to consider include:

- Are all partner organisations or those that can influence the outcome of your efforts on the same page with your engagement efforts?
- Are there policies, regulations, incentives, and power struggles within your community that clearly exacerbate the challenge or issue you are attempting to resolve? If so, what can be done to alter this environment before your engagement efforts begin? If not, how might you need to revise the goals or processes of your engagement program?
- Are these external stakeholders willing to consider the new information and collaborations your engagement efforts are designed to create?
- Can all your stakeholders speak consistently and effectively to the need, goals, and intentions of your engagement effort?
- Are there adjustments in policies or procedures that your stakeholders are willing to consider to ensure both an effective engagement process and a realistic solution based on new information or input?

PART 3

EVALUATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

After many late nights of hard work, more planning meetings than you care to remember, and many pots of coffee, your community engagement effort has finally gotten off the ground. Congratulations! You have every reason to be proud of yourself and you should probably take a bit of a breather to avoid burnout. Don't rest on your laurels too long, though – your next step is to monitor the effort's progress. If your community engagement is working perfectly in every way, you deserve the satisfaction of knowing that.

Here are a few reasons why you should develop an evaluation plan:

- It guides you through each step of the process of evaluation.
- It helps you decide what sort of information you and your stakeholders really need.
- It keeps you from wasting time gathering information that isn't needed.
- It helps you identify the best possible methods and strategies for getting the needed information.
- It helps you come up with a reasonable and realistic timeline for evaluation.
- Most importantly, it will help improve your engagement practice.

WHEN SHOULD YOU DEVELOP AN EVALUATION PLAN?

As soon as possible! The best time to do this is before you begin your community engagement effort. After that, you can do it anytime, but the earlier you develop a plan and begin to implement it, the better your effort will be, and the greater the outcomes will be at the end.

This section is designed to introduce you to the different types of evaluation, the best practices for developing your overall strategy and the potential uses for the data and information you collect.

Effective evaluation is not only an "event" that occurs at the end of a project, but is an ongoing process which helps decision-makers better understand the project; how it is impacting participants, partner agencies and the community; and how it is being influenced by both internal and external factors. Evaluation should not be conducted simply to prove that a project worked, but also to **improve** the way it worked. Evaluation is not only an accountability measuring stick imposed on projects, but also a management and learning tool for engagement efforts, projects, funders, and practitioners.

Evaluation can be used to:

- Gain insight
  - Assess needs and wants of stakeholders and participants
  - Reinforce purposes and goals of the program
  - Stimulate dialogue and raise awareness about community or project related issues.
- Improve how things are done
  - Refine plans for introducing a new practice
  - Determine the extent to which project plans were successful
  - Improve educational or communication materials
  - Decide where to allocate future resources.
- Determine the effects of the program on –
  - Skills development of participants
  - Changes in behaviour over time.

PRACTICE TIP

Your evaluation strategies, if they are to be successful, must be directly tied to the goals of your community engagement efforts.

- **If your community engagement effort is designed to address a specific issue, then your evaluation goal will be to assess the issue-specific outcomes that have occurred as a result of your program efforts. Examples might include decreasing the number of feral pigs in an area, increasing in the acres of farmland preserved, or decreasing the levels of sediment in a river.**
- **If your goal is to enhance local community participation or involvement, your evaluation goals might consider how well the program reached the intended audience, involved residents in decision-making, empowered them to implement strategies on their own, or simply increased community understanding and knowledge about the issue.**

In either case, deciding ahead of time what's important to your project – and to your stakeholders – is a critical first step.

FOUR PHASES OF EVALUATION

PLANNING

The most important considerations during the planning phase of your engagement evaluation are prioritising short and long-term goals, identifying your target audience(s), determining methods for collecting data determining what (if any) role your participants or stakeholders will have in the development process and assessing the feasibility your potential methods for your target audience(s).

IMPLEMENTATION

This is the carrying out of your evaluation plan. Although it may vary considerably from project to project, you will likely concentrate on formative and process evaluation strategies at this point in your efforts.

COMPLETION

Upon completion of your program, or the intermediate steps along the way, your evaluation efforts should be designed to examine outcomes and impacts and summarise the overall performance of your program.

REPORTING AND COMMUNICATION

In order to tell your story effectively, it's critical for you to consider what you want to communicate about the results or processes of your project, which audiences are most important to communicate with and what are the most appropriate methods for reaching these audiences.

PRIMARY TYPES OF EVALUATION

Regardless of the community engagement strategy or intervention, you will likely have three primary goals driving your evaluation effort:

1. To inform the development of your activities and programs (*formative* evaluation)
2. To improve upon the process and success for future efforts (*process* evaluation)
3. To assess the outcomes and impacts of your activities and programs (*summative* evaluation).

Formative evaluation is designed to provide information to guide program improvement **during the implementation phase**, and includes:

- *Process evaluation* to determine whether a program was well designed and implemented.
- *Developmental evaluation* to respond to unanticipated events and changes that occur during the program that have not been considered or built into the original process measures.

Summative evaluation informs judgments about whether the program worked (i. e. whether the goals and objectives were met). This includes clearly stating the criteria and evidence being used to make these judgments. Summative strategies also include:

1. *Outcome evaluation* of the observable conditions of a specific population, organisational attribute, or social condition that a program is expected to have changed. Outcome evaluation tends to focus on conditions or behaviours that the program was expected to affect most directly and immediately.
2. *Impact evaluation* examines the program's long-term goals. Summative, outcome, and impact evaluation are appropriate to conduct when the program either has been completed or has been ongoing for a substantial period of time.

THREE LEVELS OF EVALUATION

There are three levels of evaluation that are especially relevant to many community-based projects and engagement efforts. Together, they maximise our collective understanding and ability to strengthen individual and organisation engagement efforts.

PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION

Project-level evaluation focuses on a specific initiative. The project leader, with appropriate staff and input from participants and other relevant stakeholders, determines the critical evaluation questions, decides whether to use an internal evaluator or hire an external consultant and conducts and guides the project-level evaluation. While these measures can be a combination of both formative and summative metrics, the focus here is on the **specific project or initiative**. The primary goal of project-level evaluation is to improve and strengthen the overall project and engagement effort. Ultimately, project-level evaluation can be defined as **the consistent, ongoing collection and analysis of information for use in decision making.**

ORGANISATION-BASED EVALUATION

Organisation-based (or internal) evaluations are geared primarily toward answering the questions: How are we (as an organisation) engaging our stakeholders? What impact have our efforts had on the issue(s) we are seeking to address? What can we learn from these experiences to improve our engagement strategies and techniques? Evaluation efforts addressing these questions reflect on all the engagement efforts in the organisation to assess impact, and gain valuable information for improvement.

CLUSTER EVALUATION

Cluster evaluation is a means of determining how well a collection of projects, often across multiple organisations, fulfils the objective of effective engagement. The primary purpose for grouping similar projects together in “clusters” is to bring about more systemic change than would be possible in a single project or in a series of unrelated projects. For instance, evaluation efforts that assess the cross-project impact of changes in trust, relationships, or participant behaviour may be instructive for funders, practitioners and host agencies or organisations – and hopefully lead to sustained positive change at the community level.

Adapted from W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Evaluation Handbook.
www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook

PRACTICE TIP

A key element in your evaluation efforts is establishing baseline data, generally referred to as 'benchmarking'. This is particularly important if your intention is to measure change in either the short- or the long-term. If your evaluation efforts are meant to tell you how much the 'needle moved,' benchmarking tells you where that needle is now.

Two questions can help you benchmark your efforts:

1. *What is it you most want to change and how can you measure that change?* In general this should come directly from your program goals and objectives. Be as specific as possible.

2. *What do you know (or what can you document) about the current state of conditions?* This could be a wide range of individual, social, economic, or environmental conditions.

EVALUATING INPUTS, OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

- **Inputs** are those things that you do as a group or organisation to achieve your goals. Examples include staff time, grant-writing, web development, mailings, survey development, conducting meetings or other events, and evaluation. Inputs can be *formative* or *process* evaluation measures.

- **Outputs** are the results of your inputs and activities. How many people participated? Did you reach your intended audience? How many sessions were delivered? What are the tangible products (e.g. fact sheets, curriculum etc.) Outputs can be *formative*, *process* and *summative* evaluation measures.

- **Outcomes** are the overall benefits or changes on the participants you witnessed – in the short and intermediate terms. Did people change behaviour or attitudes? Did they acquire new knowledge of skills? Outcomes can be *formative* and/or *summative* evaluation measures.

- **Impacts** are the overall effect or influence of your program or intervention. These are the long term effects on the social, environmental, or economic conditions you sought to address. Impacts can be *summative* evaluation measures.

Increasingly, these distinctions are important to funders of all types (i.e. public, stakeholders, funders, etc.) and are crucial for assessing change. Knowing the differences, and being able to speak to them is critical to assessing your impact, telling your story effectively, and gathering data for program improvement.

PRACTICE TIP

CHOOSING WHAT TO MEASURE

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of evaluating any program or intervention is deciding what to measure and how.

The SMART framework provides a simple guide.

Specific – What exactly do you want to do? Can you measure it?

Measurable – Can you measure whether or not you have achieved the objective?

Achievable – Is the objective achievable? Can you get it done in the time you have available, within your budget and within the prevailing political/institutional climate? Can you measure it?

Relevant – Will achieving this objective contribute to the delivery of your overall aim and support your/your funders'/your community's goals? Can you measure it?

Time-bound – When do you want to achieve this objective and/or when do you think you will be able to achieve this objective?

THE LOGIC MODEL

Perhaps the most widely used tool for concisely linking activities, resources and short- and long-term outcomes is the logic model. Logic models are graphic representations of a program showing the intended relationships between investments, actions and results. They help to design results-based programs and collect the data to answer important questions about the success (or otherwise) of the program.

At its most basic, a logic model maps the logical relationships between inputs, outputs and outcomes (impact).

LOGIC MODEL

Logic models require that each of these components be specifically identified and tied to the evaluation metrics and methods that can measure them. A simplified example might be:

Inputs	Outputs		Outcome metrics		
	Activities	**Participants**	**Short term**	**Medium term**	**Long term**
Staff time Money	Community meetings to identify problem and explore options; # of meetings Location of meetings	Demographics, diversity of participants, # of participants, etc.	Changes in trust, knowledge, skills, awareness, process satisfaction etc.	Changes in behaviour, networks, trust, relationships, number community lead activities occurring, etc.	Decrease in invasive species numbers, increased external funding to support efforts, etc.

INDICATORS AND METRICS

INDICATORS

Indicators translate general concepts into specific, measurable parts. Indicators should address the criteria that will be used to judge the program or the engagement efforts. They reflect the aspects of the program that are **most meaningful to monitor**. Several indicators are usually needed to track the implementation and effects of a community engagement program or intervention.

Indicators might include:

- The participation rate
- How many people were exposed to the program, and for how long
- Changes in participant behaviour
- Changes in community conditions or norms
- Changes in the environment (e.g., new programs, policies, or practices)

Indicators can be broad-based and don't need to focus only on a program's long-term goals. They can also address other factors that influence program effectiveness, such as service quality, community capacity, or inter-organisational relations. Indicators for these and similar concepts can be created by systematically identifying and then tracking markers of what is said or done when the concept is expressed. It is also important to remember that in the course of an evaluation, indicators may need to be modified or new ones adopted.

Measuring program performance by tracking indicators is only one part of evaluation, and shouldn't be used as a basis for decision making in isolation. There are perils to using performance indicators as a substitute for a full evaluation process. For example, an indicator, such as a rising number of pest species, may be falsely assumed to reflect a failing program when it may actually be due to changing environmental conditions that are beyond the program's control.

PRACTICE TIP

BALANCED SCORECARD

One way to develop multiple indicators is to create a 'balanced scorecard', which contains indicators that are carefully selected to complement one another. According to this strategy, program processes and effects are viewed from multiple perspectives using small groups of related indicators.

For example, a balanced scorecard might include indicators of how the program is being delivered; what participants think of the program; what effects are observed; what goals were attained; and what changes are occurring in the environment around the program.

Remember that your choice of metrics or indicators can, and in many cases should, be developed in concert with participants in your engagement efforts. This can provide important insight regarding what's most important to measure from their perspective as well as enhance 'buy-in' and connection between the project and your target audience.

Source: University of Wisconsin "Developing a Logic Model: Teaching And Training Guide". http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/pdf/lmcourseall.pdf

FORMATIVE EVALUATION METRICS

Examples might include:

- Representativeness
- Inclusivity
- Participation rate
- Identification of common goals
- Fairness
- Satisfaction
- Effectiveness (process and methods)
- Transparency
- Incorporation of values and beliefs into discussion
- Trust
- Communication
- Continuity.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION METRICS

- Policy/decision influence
- Adequate time to develop solutions or regulations
- Reduction of legal challenges
- Agency or organization responsiveness
- Trust
- Social, economic, environmental impact
- Participants' values/opinions
- Conflict resolution
- Volunteer time and effort
- Effectiveness and cost effectiveness
- Savings or resources generated
- Effect on planning process

(Adapted from Rowe, Gene, and Lynn J. Frewer. "Evaluation public-participation exercises: a research agenda." Science, technology & human values 29, no. 4 (204): 512-556.).

COLLECTING EVALUATION INFORMATION

There are a range of options for gathering the engagement evaluation data you need. When developing methods for collecting your data, consider two important questions:

- How **suitable** is each method to your intended audience?
- What information is the **most critical** and how can you make it easy to collect this data?

COLLECTING SHORT-TERM METRICS

Measuring short-term changes. What changes in attitudes, knowledge, skills, or intentions can be documented? Common collection methods include:

- Post program survey – immediately after one or a series of projects have concluded. This is easy and useful but is only reliable if you have established benchmark data
- Retrospective survey – generally immediately after a program (or series of programs) but also asks respondents to reflect or assess their situation, knowledge, skills, attitudes or behaviours prior to the program(s).
- Pre/post survey–identical surveys done before and after the program or intervention.

- During – collecting information at multiple times throughout the course of a program. Can be either formal and non-formal.
- Skill application/assessment/demonstration/discussion – applicable especially (but not solely) for skill development.

COLLECTING MEDIUM-TERM METRICS

Measuring intermediate changes. What behaviours actually changed after a specified length of time? Common methods include:

- Follow-up surveys
- Focus groups and other group techniques
- Logging behaviours and behavioural change
- Monitoring of completion of follow-up activities
- Observation
- Case studies.

COLLECTING LONG-TERM METRICS

Measuring long-term impacts and outcomes. What have been the long term and sustained changes stemming from your engagement program? Common methods include:

- Secondary data sources
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Impact assessments
- Document review and collection (media reports, printed publications, etc.)

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

Community-based participatory research enlists those who are most affected by an issue – typically in collaboration or partnership with others who have evaluation skills – to conduct evaluation on and analyse that issue or project, with the goal of devising (or revising) strategies to address it.

In other words, community-based participatory research adds to, or replaces academic and other professional research with research done by community members, so that research results both comes from and goes directly back to the **people who need them most and can make the best use of them.**

There are several levels of participatory research. At one end of the spectrum is academic or government research that gathers information directly from community members. The community members may (or may not) be asked for their opinions about what they need and what they think will help.

At another level, academic or other researchers recruit or hire members of an affected group – often because they are familiar with and known by the community – to collect data. In this case, the collectors may or may not also help to analyse the information that they have gathered.

A third level of participatory research sees academic, government, or other professionals recruiting members of an affected group as **partners in a research project**. The community members become colleagues, participating in the conception and design of the project, the metrics to be assessed, data collection, and data analysis.

The essence of this approach is respecting the fact that participants are likely to have project metrics that are important to them, and recognising that these are the measures by which they would determine success. **Incorporating these considerations creates another powerful community engagement opportunity.**

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

Most Significant Change (MSC) is a story-based method designed to contribute to summative evaluation. This method represents a radical departure from traditional, positivist approaches to evaluation in that it is a bottom-up, rather than top-down, process with no pre-defined indicators. It is useful as part of a strategy for evaluating programs that address complex problems that may have unexpected outcomes, and those that have a broad range of funders and stakeholder groups.

The process begins when those managing the program, along with selected stakeholders, identify the desired change(s). Then, stories of significant change are collected at the field level from affected community members and other stakeholders.

These stories are oriented around a question along the lines of: "During the last month, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place in the program?"

Stories can be collected in a variety of ways: by field staff in the course of their work, through interview and note-taking, during group discussion, or be written by stakeholders themselves. Stories are filtered up systematically through the organisational hierarchy. At each level, participants are asked to consider which significant change, among those captured, was the most significant of all. At every level, discussions are recorded for the purpose of transparency. These discussions serve as feedback for program managers, field staff and primary users.

MSC is useful as both a form of evaluation and as platform for organisational learning. The process for selecting stories generates dialogue and deliberation regarding program goals and organisational values. Because this process is an open one, it is possible for stakeholders at all levels to understand how these goals and values are being defined.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change evaluations aim to reveal hidden dynamics that may influence program development and implementation. In a facilitated group setting, participants identify long-term outcomes, typically by first developing a clearly defined problem statement and then considering what conditions will solve the problem.

Once consensus has been reached regarding a problem statement and the long-term outcome, participants begin the process of "backward mapping" – or working backward from the long-term outcome to construct a causal pathway. This is represented visually by vertical chains of outcomes connected to one another by arrows, with the long-term outcome at the top and early outcomes at the bottom. The process illuminates key assumptions, and allows participants to clarify the rationale or logic behind the causal relationships depicted.

Once the outcomes framework has been finalised, participants identify and locate existing and proposed interventions, connecting them directly to desired outcomes. They also identify gaps where interventions may be necessary. This results in a strategy, or series of coordinated interventions. Then participants identify indicators for each outcome, and prioritise a subset of indicators to track as the interventions are implemented. Finally, participants complete a quality review – assessing the plausibility, feasibility, and testability of their framework – and write a narrative that summarises their theory of change and positions their interventions in this context.

PRACTICE TIP

THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Both MSC and Theory of Change are forms of reflexive evaluation, in that they stimulate a critical examination of things typically taken for granted – goals, values and understandings of cause and effect. Both approaches reveal and question foundational systems for making meaning. These systems of thought form the thread that connects (or fails to connect) individuals, groups, and institutions. Moreover, they influence action and thus produce observable and measurable outcomes.

MSC, Theory of Change, and other forms of reflexive evaluation provide a platform for overcoming path dependency (business as usual), and seeking new directions. They build individual and organisational capacity for ongoing learning and adaptation, even as conditions change.

TELLING THE EVALUATION STORY

To tell the story effectively, consider what you want to communicate about the results or processes of your project, which audiences are most important to communicate with, and what are the most appropriate methods for reaching these audiences.

Each type of stakeholder will have a different perspective about what they want to learn from the evaluation. Every group is unique, and you may find that there are other sorts of stakeholders to consider within your own organisation. The easiest way to shape your communications is to ask each stakeholder what they want to know from the evaluation.

Grant makers and funders, for example, will usually want to know how many people were reached and served by the initiative, as well as whether the initiative had the community-level impact it intended to have.

The project team may want to use evaluation results to guide them in decisions about their programs, and where they are putting their efforts.

Researchers will most likely be interested in understanding whether any improvements in the issue were a result of your engagement programs or initiatives; they may also want to study the overall structure of your group or initiative to identify the conditions under which success (or otherwise) may result.

PRACTICE TIP

Evaluation should take up about 10% to 15% of your total budget. That may sound like a lot, but remember that evaluation is an essential tool for improving and communication about your initiative. When considering how to balance costs and benefits, ask yourself the following questions:

- **What do you need to know?**
- **What is required by the community?**
- **What is required by the funding bodies?**

WHEN ARE FEEDBACK AND REPORTS NEEDED?

Whenever you feel it's appropriate. Of course, you will provide feedback and reports at the end of the evaluation, but you should also provide periodic feedback and reports throughout the duration of the project or initiative. In particular, since you should provide feedback and reports at meetings of your steering committee or overall coalition, find out ahead of time how often they'd like updates. Funding partners will want to know how the evaluation is going as well.

WHEN SHOULD EVALUATION END?

Evaluation should end shortly after the project is complete – usually when the final report is due. Don't wait too long after the project has been completed to finish up your evaluation – it's best to do this while everything is still fresh in your mind and you can still get access to any information you might need.

WHAT SORT OF PRODUCTS SHOULD YOU EXPECT TO GET OUT OF THE EVALUATION?

The main product you'll want to come up with is a **report** that you can share with everyone involved. This report should include:

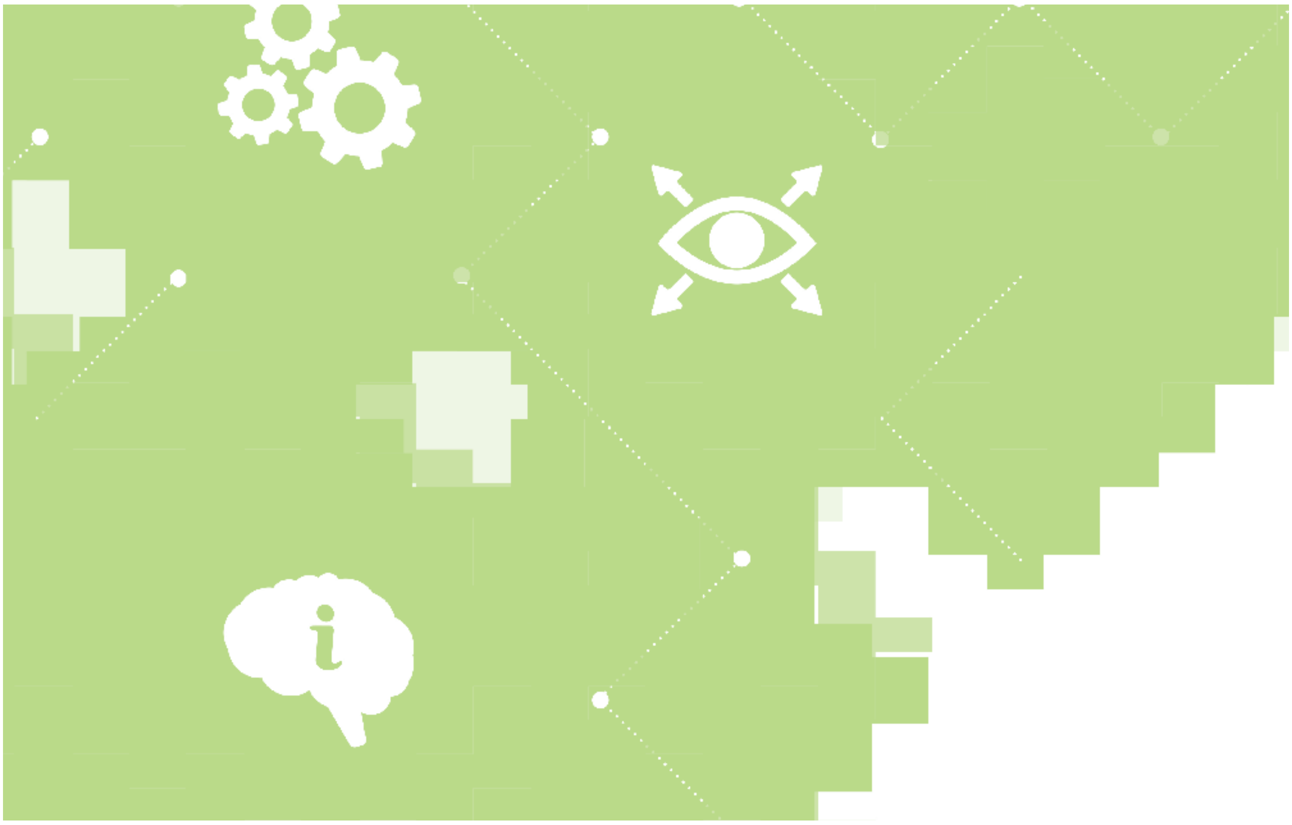
- Effects expected by shareholders: Find out what key people want to know. Be sure to address any information that you know they're going to want to hear about.
- Differences in the behaviours of key individuals: Find out how your efforts have changed targeted behaviours.
- Differences in conditions in the community: Find out what has changed. Is the public aware of your efforts? Do they support you? What steps are they taking to help achieve the goals?

You'll probably also include specific tools (i.e. brief reports summarising data), annual reports, quarterly or monthly reports from the monitoring system, and anything else that is mutually agreed upon between the organisation and the evaluation team.

PRACTICE TIP

An effective evaluation plan will ensure the most effective use of limited resources. An evaluation plan should anticipate the scope, relevance, and costs of evaluation as early in the engagement process as possible.

An evaluation plan provides an outline of the overall goals and strategies. It summarises what you are going to do, why you are doing it, how you will undertake the process and how you will monitor your success. It helps tell the story of the process to a range of different audiences.



FINAL THOUGHTS

A good community engagement plan is valuable whether your project or issue is small or large, but is especially important if the initiative you are focusing on is a complex or difficult project or issue that impacts a large number of stakeholders.

An engagement plan will improve your ability to:

- Inform citizens and stakeholders about the project
- Gather input from citizens and stakeholders regarding their opinions and support for, and assessment of, various actions, goals, and priorities
- Ensure that citizens and stakeholders concerns, aspirations and ideas for addressing your specific issue or problem are understood and considered
- Identify alternatives, consequences and preferred solutions
- Identify and engage stakeholder groups, leaders and citizens that influence decision-making
- Identify solutions that better fit the local context
- Recruit and keep stakeholders involved throughout the initiative.

The steps outlined in this handbook will help you develop a plan for a successful engagement effort. These include:

1. Defining the issue or problem and frame the issue in a way that stakeholders can discuss alternatives, solutions and consequences.
2. Identifying your stakeholders
3. Matching your stakeholders to engagement goals
4. Identifying the face-to-face and on-line engagement tools you will use to engage stakeholders and citizens
5. Developing a communication plan for your engagement effort
6. Developing a plan to evaluate your engagement efforts.

The Resource list provides additional sources of information about engagement. We encourage you to access these for more detail about specific processes or theories that have been mentioned in this handbook.

We wish you all the best with your ongoing community engagement practice.

RESOURCES

Material in this handbook is drawn from online learning tools developed by extension staff at Pennsylvania State University in collaboration with the University of New England (Australia).

Online tools and learning modules can be viewed at the following sites (current December 2017):
PestSmart connect: https://www.pestsmart.org.au/
Penn State Community Engagement Toolbox: http://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/engagement-toolbox

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APPENDIX

Idea generation and narrowing tools for facilitators

Tool	Description	How to do it	When it's useful
Brain mapping – idea generation	Graphic way to display the analysis of different parts of a situation and the consequences of a particular decision	1. Write the action in the entire circle 2. Place the consequences of that action in circles attached to that circle 3. As those consequences have other consequences and so on, add those circles	To break down a problem and analyse subsequent consequences To help map out the complexity of a given choice and address the steps necessary to address those issues
Brainstorming – idea generation	Combines individual thinking and group idea time, encouraging participation from all	1. Allow time for each member to write ideas down on their own 2. Ask each person to read one idea from their list 3. After one or two rounds of collecting ideas on a flip chart open up the list for broader discussion. 4. Once list is complete ask members to add any additional ideas that have come to mind	When additional time is necessary to generate to think about issues When introverted or dominant members are in the group A variation for this process includes having participants pass their list to another person to provide anonymity
Sticky note brainstorming – idea generation	Individuals write single ideas on large sticky notes which are then placed on the wall Ideas are then grouped by similar themes	1. Give each member sticky notes and markers and ask them to write down one idea per note 2. Have them place sticky notes on the wall 3. Have members read other's ideas and begin to collectively group similar themes as appropriate	When members need to move around When people want some distance or anonymity from certain ideas When you want to have the ability to quickly move ideas around into effective groups
Visioning – idea generation	Highly participatory approach to goal setting that asks participants to consider what their community or organisation will look like in some future point (usually 2-5 years)	1. Follow similar steps as brainstorming detailed above.	When you need to get initial ideas and goals and a shared vision of the future
Force field analysis – idea generation	Structured method for looking at two opposing forces	1. Once you have identified a topic, situation, or project ask participants to list two ideas under two categories – a) forces that help us and b) forces that hinder us	When you need to identify all the factors at play in a situation so that barriers and problems can be overcome

Tool	Description	How to do it	When it's useful
Gap analysis – idea generation	A method of identifying blocks to achieving desired goals	1. Identify the present state 2. Identify the future state or desired vision 3. Have participants Identify what's missing, what it will take to realise the future scenario	When a group needs to understand the gap between where they are now and where they want to be
Root cause analysis – idea generation	Sometimes referred to as the Fishbone method. A systematic analysis of root causes of an issue rather than it's symptoms.	1. Explain the differences between causes and effects 2. Once the main effect or problem is identified place this at the 'head' of the fish. 3. All possible causes and their causes are identified as the 'ribs' of the fish 4. Have participants identify solutions to each of the causes	When you need to delve below symptoms
Decision grid – narrowing ideas	Quantitative method for scoring solution choices against an agreed upon set of criteria	1. Ask members to identify 3-5 criteria by which a decision should be based 2. Each option or solution (placed in the rows with criteria as the column headers) is then evaluated based on the extent to which it meets each criteria (e.g. 1=does not meet criteria, 2=somewhat meets criteria, 3=good at meeting criteria) 3. Scores are then totalled both down columns and across rows. Highest row scores will determine overall best choice	When you need to bring objectivity and criteria to bear in a decision or priority setting
Nominal group process – narrowing choices	Method to objectively assess each individual's ranked preference of choices and to then combine into overall picture of group's priorities	1. Each person individually rank orders his or her preference for identified solution choices (first choice = 1, second choice = 2, etc) 2. Individual ranks are recorded (usually on a flip chart) in a grid with choices in the column headings and people listed in the rows 3. Facilitator asks each member to discuss the reasoning behind their choice. 4. Members are then offered the opportunity to revise individual rankings 5. Scores are then totalled for each column. Lowest number identifies group's overall highest priority	When you need to manage strong personalities or value differences. Avoids getting into endless debates Provides objective evaluation and discussion. May however gloss over important considerations or perspective if not effectively addressed

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