

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is the process of talking with and/or receiving information from a broad range of community members to understand the diversity of needs of the members of that community. The goal is to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes and equitable decision-making processes that help to strengthen relationships and trust between community members including groups, businesses, individuals and governments. While not all will engage in the process, bringing as many diverse ideas to the table as possible helps to prioritise activities for the community.

There are so many different ways to engage with community. The first principle is to 'go where they are'. This means ensuring that people who don't come into town much are not excluded and we find ways to understand their perspectives. This, of course, is a time consuming task so the period of engagement can be longer than you first anticipated – keep this in mind for your planning.

When we 'do' community engagement well, it often leads to more community members actively participating in civic life. It also raises awareness that not all people think the same.

Methods of engagement

- Posters where there is high foot traffic
- Postcard activity either to place in box or to hang at the venue for all to see. These can be done as wish flags using different coloured fabric that are hung around the area on a line
- Online survey
- Online ideas board
- Community door knocking
- Phone discussions
- In a year... exercise (sticky note saying In a year, [town] will be [i.e. the best used space in town])
- Flash cards with ideas to get thinking happening
- Draw ideas on the footpath and have people vote on ideas in chalk
- Ask businesses to host community planning information and 'voting' boxes for people to submit their ideas
- Have up-to-date infographics in high traffic areas to show the community how many people have had input and what ideas are most popular
- Pop up stand near the local schools; have post it notes for people to have their say
- Promotion on "What's on signboards"
- A story in the local paper or news sheet
- Use of social media:
 - Websites
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Email lists



Community Planning Program Toolkit

- Via Council – survey letter drops, through the Gazette, website, Social media
- Surveys
- Ideas boxes
- Face to face meetings / focussed discussions
- Public meetings
- Presenting at meetings of community groups i.e., sports, service, kinder groups
- Presence at events i.e. Farmers markets, polling booths (government elections), community events
- Asking schools for a space on their noticeboards to advertise how students can become engaged
- Present at school assembly and have classes vote on ideas
- Organise sets of cards with different options on them for people to sort into priority order of ideas