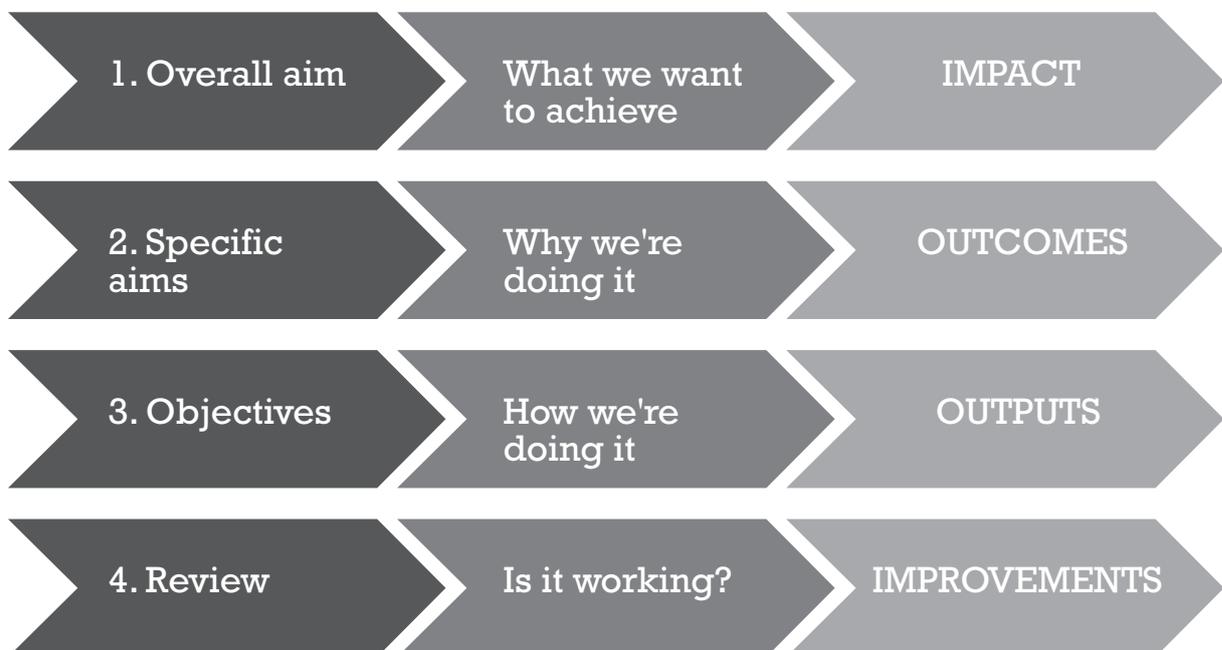


Community engagement: Developing a strategy

Some questions to help with planning...

This guidance outlines some important things to consider when planning a community engagement strategy for your project or enterprise. There are a variety of approaches to community consultation and engagement. The aim of developing an engagement strategy is to be able to plan and deliver an appropriate community engagement process that will allow you to achieve your desired outcomes. This means being clear about your aims, identifying your target audience, understanding your resources and capacity, and planning accordingly.

This document is structured under four headings (shown below) which you can use as the basis for your own strategy document and action plan. Each heading is presented with a series of questions and prompts to help you consider what to include in each section. The boxes in each section include some examples of what kind of thing to put in your plan and how to structure it as a working document.



continued ...

1) Overall aim

What is your 'mission' (overall and/or for this specific project)? What do you want to achieve? What impact are you hoping to make?

The overall aim of the project and/or organisation is to...

[Describe the aim of the project e.g. reducing CO₂ emissions from the local housing stock, reducing fuel bills for local residents in fuel poverty]

2) Aims of the strategy

What are your reasons for involving the community? (There may be more than one relating to different parts of the project.)

- Is this a **consultation** (i.e. are you inviting people to have a say on the future of the group, business or project)? Are you **promoting** the project by getting messages out to people (e.g. to garner support or raise awareness)?
- What can be changed in your project plans? What is fixed? How much room is there for negotiation on existing plans? How about in the future? Will there be a chance for people to make recommendations (or decisions) on project activities?
- How extensively do you need to consult to overcome potential objections?
- How widely do you need to publicise what you're doing to achieve success?

The strategy has been put together in order to: *[amend/insert/delete the example specific aims as applicable]*

- consult with the community at the start of a project, and use input to finalise the proposal
- get messages out, share information, raise awareness or improve understanding about a project or an issue
- establish dialogue where individuals, groups or organisations can feed in ideas and help shape a project as it develops
- involve people actively in a project or enterprise (e.g. as volunteers, shareholders or partners)
- other...

3) Objectives

i) Identify your target audience

- Who are your stakeholders? Who could be affected (positively or negatively) by your plans? Who is likely to be able to influence the success or failure of your project? Are these the same people who you hope to engage through this strategy?

For a more detailed approach to identifying your stakeholders there is a good exercise here: www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/download_file/22

- Do you want to reach as many people as possible (say, the county or region), or are you concentrating on specific groups or geographical areas?
- Are you aiming to contact individuals or organisations or certain interest groups? Who do you want to actively engage in on-going dialogue?

This strategy aims to target:

[Describe your target audience, including rationale if appropriate, e.g. householders in Road X, the local residents association, local businesses, elderly residents living in Village Y, parents at the local school, the village hall committee etc.]

ii) Know your resources

- Do you have a budget? What is it?
- Who will carry out the work? How many people? How much time can they offer? Does this affect what you can do?
- Do you have the right skills and resources to carry out consultation and/or marketing activities? If not, what do you need to develop or pay for?

This strategy aims to target:

In order to achieve the actions set out below, a budget of £X [amount of money allocated to the consultation process] will be needed together with Y [number of days of work] person days to deliver the work.

Additional resources and/or expertise may need to be brought in, including the following: [describe additional equipment and expertise and any cost implications]

continued ...

iii) Be clear on timeframes

- Do you have a deadline? How long do you need for the activities you have in mind? Is this realistic with the time that you identified as available above?
- Can you break down the task into phases and milestones? When do you need to have finished each phase by?
- Do you need to factor in planning time, and time for collecting and analysing feedback?

*This work will begin [start of engagement and/or consultation activity] with key milestones as follows:
[insert key dates and milestones]*

- *e.g. Hold two public open meetings in April 2013*
- *e.g. Send out a questionnaire to local residents in May 2013 and analyse the results by the end of June*
- *e.g. Have completed one radio interview with a local station by June 2013*

iv) Decide on approaches

What are the best approaches to use to engage your community? Your approach could include focus groups, steering groups, public meetings, events, seminars, audits, a local media campaign, door to door surveys, web based surveys, leaflets, posters, exhibitions, competitions, a website, regular newsletters, etc. It is likely that you may need to use different approaches for the different aims of your consultation.

v) Keeping everyone up-to-date

- How will you keep everyone in the loop within your group? (e.g. meetings, email, phone)
- How will you feed back to community groups and individuals or other stakeholders? (e.g. meetings, printed material, newsletters)
- How often will these communications take place? Who will organise them? How much of your resources (time and money) will this require?

What?	Audience	How often
e.g. Group meetings	Internal group	Monthly
e.g. Newsletter distributed door to door	Local residents	Every quarter
e.g. Website	Stakeholders	Fortnightly updates. Quarterly review of content

4) Write an action plan

Taking all of the previous thinking into account, you can set specific objectives with dates, responsibilities, budgets and so on. This is likely to be based around the approaches outlined in your objectives.

The action plan should cover: what exactly you are going to do, who will do it, in what timeframe and using what resources.

An example action plan:

Action 1	Hold three public meetings
Specific aim(s)	Use community input to shape project proposal Raise awareness and improve understanding of the project
Who	Jeff and Sue to lead
Date(s)	February to April
Approach	Public workshops to gather views on the project Advertisement of project and meetings week before in local paper, on website and in newsletter Distribute leaflets about project week before outside local supermarket Try to get radio publicity
Resources	Budget? £75 per meeting for room hire and refreshment; £50 adverts in local newspaper, £30 leaflet printing costs Person days? 2 person days for planning and publicity
Review indicator(s)	Other expertise or equipment? 3 group members at each event How many people attended and gave feedback? Number of newsletter sign-ups from the meetings?
Action 2	Etc ...
Specific aim(s)	Etc ...

continued ...

5) Review

Finally, the strategy needs revisiting regularly to see if you are on track and achieving what you wanted to, and to check that it is still fit for purpose. As Brigadier Pemberton said, “you need to have a plan but you need to be able to change it”. If you set up a consultation or an awareness raising campaign...

- How many people did you reach?
- Was it successful? How do you know?
- Have you learnt anything from the running of the campaign that needs to be fed back into the aims, objectives or outputs of the main project plan?
- Revisit your overall project plans – have your priorities changed as a result of the consultation (e.g. the focus of your project, specific activities, or the order in which to go about things)?
- How will you act on any responses or suggestions you receive?
- How will you decide what you can and can't include in your project?
- How will you pass on issues raised that are outside the scope of your project or group?

The strategy will be reviewed every [how often do you plan to review this] by the project team to monitor how successfully the aims are being achieved, and to identify improvements that can be made. The findings from the review of the consultation strategy will be used to feed back into the main project plan on an ongoing basis.

Next review date: [insert date here]

Here are links to some more resources you may find useful:

Stakeholder engagement:

www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/download_file/22

Summary of approaches to community consultation and engagement:

www.cse.org.uk/downloads/file/approaches_to_consultation_and_engagement.pdf

Three short videos on consulting the community:

www.planlocal.org.uk/videos/submenus/submenu-consulting.html

Introduction to facilitation skills and group management:

www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/view/planning-promoting-and-facilitating-events/28

Guidance on promoting your events:

www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/view/planning-promoting-and-facilitating-events/29

Practical guidance on setting up events:

www.planlocal.org.uk/downloads/view/planning-promoting-and-facilitating-events/30

Fife Community Consultation handbook:

http://admin.1fife.org.uk/uploadfiles/publications/c64_ConsultationHandbook_complete.pdf