



information
and privacy
commission
new south wales

Charter for Public Participation – a guide to assist agencies and promote citizen engagement

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1 Introduction

1.1 Public participation in a global context

Public participation, also described as citizen engagement, is a fundamental tenet of democracy and Open Government. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommends that in order to embed public participation as part of their core business, governments should provide:

- strong leadership and commitment
- coordination of public participation across and within government agencies
- adequate financial, human and technical resources
- appropriate guidance and training
- a supportive and accountable organisational culture.¹

1.2 Supporting public participation in NSW

In response, the NSW Information Commissioner has developed this *Charter for Public Participation – a guide to assist agencies and promote citizen engagement* (the Charter). This Charter aims to assist NSW agencies to seek effective public input into the development and delivery of policies and services.²

The Charter is underpinned by NSW's [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#) (GIPA Act), which has as its object to advance government that is open, accountable, fair and effective. The GIPA Act outlines the rights of the public in accessing NSW government information.³

The Charter provides a practical and principle-based approach for embedding public participation in agency decision making frameworks and policy development. This Charter brings together leading authorities and resources to build capacity and guide the NSW public sector in engaging with the community.

It provides guidance, tools and case studies to assist in planning for and conducting effective engagement to promote and achieve meaningful public participation. Further, the Charter provides:

- a framework for developing a policy on public participation
- a guide to encourage, enable and embed effective citizen engagement in policy design and development, thereby building public confidence in government decision making processes and service delivery outcomes⁴
- a practical and flexible roadmap to guide agencies in embedding public participation in agency frameworks
- practical information, steps and tools for planning effective engagement with citizens
- useful examples of successful public participation.

1.3 Resources for public participation

Public participation is a rapidly changing field. This document contains examples of tools, frameworks and case studies that have been used by other authorities to facilitate meaningful engagement with the wider community. Each agency's aims and circumstances will vary, therefore, the examples and case studies are intended to provide a starting point.

¹ *Public Participation in Government Decision-Making*, Victorian Auditor-General's Report, May 2017, p2

² *Towards a NSW Charter for Public Participation*, June 2016, p1

³ See *Towards a NSW Charter for Public Participation*, June 2016 for more details on how the GIPA Act supports public participation.

⁴ Collaboration between the IPC and the office of the Customer Service Commissioner.

There is no prescriptive method of best practice when it comes to embedding active public participation in government activities. However, the value of public participation in the development of policies and service delivery is well documented.

Investment in these new and effective approaches to public participation will enable agencies to build capacity, develop and sustain partnerships, and deliver effective solutions to contemporary challenges.⁵

Figure 1: Acknowledgement

The Charter is underpinned by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values for Public Participation. IAP2 is an international member association that seeks to promote and improve the practice of public participation and community engagement. It brings together individuals, governments, institutions and other entities that affect the public interest throughout the world. IAP2 Australasia is the leading public participation association in Australasia.

The contribution of IAP2 resources in the Charter is gratefully acknowledged.

See: <https://www.iap2.org.au/>

The experience of other agencies and organisations can provide useful examples of effective approaches to public participation. The appendices of this Charter contain ideas and tools to support public participation. The IPC acknowledges the expertise shared by all contributors.

The appendices are as follows:

- [Appendix 1](#) includes the IAP2 Public Participation Toolbox,⁶ which outlines public participation tools that can be used for different levels of engagement. These tools should be aligned with defined agency objectives, as well as with agency capacity to manage and fund the public participation initiative being developed.
- [Appendix 2](#) contains some examples of online tools to support public participation.
- [Appendix 3](#) provides additional case studies and other (non-online) methods of engagement.
- [Appendix 4](#) contains sample templates that can be used for planning participation projects or activities.
- [Appendix 5](#) describes the IPC's work in supporting and promoting public participation.

⁵ *Doing Things Differently: Raising Productivity, Improving Service and Enhancing Collaboration across the NSW Public Sector*, available from <http://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports> --- data/other-publications/doing-things-differently-report/doing-things-differently-report

⁶ Drawn from the International Association for Public Participation Australasia – <https://www.iap2.org.au/Resources>

2 Defining and understanding public participation

2.1 What is public participation?

The IAP2 defines public participation as involving those affected by a decision in the decision making process.⁷ Public participation encompasses activities ranging from simply informing people about government activities to delegating decision making to the public.

It can include:

- informing the community via one-way communication methods
- consulting (seeking and gathering feedback) via two-way communication methods
- collaborating with citizens in decision making processes
- working in partnership with parts of the community
- empowering citizens to make their own decisions about their community.

Based on the core values of IAP2,⁸ public participation:

- is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision making process
- includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision
- promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers
- seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
- seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
- provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

2.2 The GIPA Act and public participation in NSW

The object of the GIPA Act is to open government information to the public and advance government that is open, accountable, fair and effective. This object enshrines a commitment by the NSW Government to NSW citizens that government decision making will be open, transparent and accountable, and will promote public participation.

The GIPA Act contains a number of mechanisms to ensure that the public can access government information as it relates to policy formulation and service delivery, and actively participate in these activities. The Charter provides a practical roadmap for embedding these functions of the GIPA Act into everyday government agency activities.

These mechanisms are also promoted through the [Agency Information Guide](#) (AIG) scheme established under the GIPA Act.⁹ AIGs connect government agencies and the public by providing a clear and consistent device through which citizens can identify information held by agencies with certainty and confidence. AIGs promote the object of the GIPA Act by opening government information to the public at the lowest possible cost.

⁷ See <https://www.iap2.org.au>. The use of IAP2 resources is gratefully acknowledged.

⁸ See <https://www.iap2.org.au/About-Us/About-IAP2-Australasia-/Core-Values>

⁹ See Part 3 of the GIPA Act – Open Access Information

Figure 2: Agency Information Guides

Under Part 3 Division 2 of the GIPA Act, all agencies (other than the minister) must have an Agency Information Guide (AIG) that specifies how the public can participate in the formulation of agency policies and the exercise of the agency's functions.

As agencies implement actions as suggested in this Charter, it is important to describe these actions in their AIG.

The IPC's [Guideline 6: Agency Information Guides](#) summarises the legal obligation for agencies in preparing and updating an AIG and explains the opportunities provided by AIGs to promote Open Government, Open Data and public participation.

2.3 Why do people want to engage with government?

The NSW public sector is responsible for the planning, development and delivery of policies and services that will benefit the NSW community.

Levels of public trust in government have been eroding worldwide; in Australia, they reached an all-time low in 2018.¹⁰ The NSW Customer Satisfaction Measurement Survey 2017 revealed that only 59 % of consumers currently believe the NSW government demonstrates openness and transparency in decision making. Citizens of NSW expect government to engage with and involve their communities in policy development and service delivery, but according to the same survey, only 51% of customers agree that NSW government does so.¹¹

Public participation sits at the heart of Open Government and is a critical tool in addressing this decline in trust.

2.4 Benefits of public participation

Governments are increasingly recognising the value of public participation as a tool to enable more effective governing and, importantly, to ensure policy and service outcomes better reflect community needs.

Government agencies can benefit from active engagement with communities in order to:

- gain insight into the needs of the community, thereby guiding the development of better public policy
- promote earlier identification, and therefore more effective management of risks
- build community trust through open and transparent public participation activities
- develop stronger community relationships through enhanced open dialogue and active listening to citizens
- ensure a more effective response to increased scrutiny by opening the doors to government operations
- improve their capacity to meet community expectations
- identify new opportunities to provide citizens with information about policies and services before they are put in place
- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending and services¹²
- improve public perception of government policy and decision making processes, and therefore acceptance of change.¹³

¹⁰ [Edelman Trust Barometer 2018](#)

¹¹ Source: [Office of the Customer Service Commissioner, Customer Satisfaction Measurement Survey, 2017](#).

¹² ["Have your say... but how?" Improving public participation in NSW](#), NCOSS Research Report, November 2014, University of Sydney – NSW Council of Social Service

Communities can benefit through:

- increased awareness of the development of new policies or services
- increased opportunity to contribute to prospective solutions
- increased satisfaction based on citizen contribution; a sense that government policy is being shaped by the community¹⁴
- better relationships with government through improved communication pathways and networks
- increased capacity to keep governments accountable and transparent
- mutual understanding of, and improved trust and confidence in government.

2.5 Developing a participatory culture

The OECD provides insights, informed by research, into the importance of cultural change in delivering meaningful public participation.

At the macro-level, effective public participation requires institutional barriers to be addressed, particularly the power dynamic (Barnes, 2007¹⁵; Lister, 2007¹⁶; Meagher, 2006¹⁷). This requires leadership and commitment from both politicians and senior public administrators to create an authorising environment and culture that supports public participation.

Governments have a key role to play in encouraging citizen engagement... The first responsibility is to create an enabling environment; the second is to clarify the rules of engagement (OECD, 2009, p206¹⁸).

Embedding a commitment to meaningful public participation into government policy processes requires specific institutional mechanisms, such as legal and policy frameworks, along with sufficient time, skills, and resources (OECD, 2009¹⁹).

These insights are also reflected in the [Council of Social Service in NSW \(NCOSS\) Research Report, *Have your say... but how? Improving public participation in NSW.*](#)

¹³ *Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making*, p18-20

¹⁴ Collaboration between the IPC and the office of the Customer Service Commissioner.

¹⁵ M. Barnes (2007), *Power, participation and political renewal: case studies in public participation* (J. Newman and H. Sullivan eds), Bristol, Policy Press

¹⁶ R. Lister (2007), "From object to subject: including marginalised citizens in policy making", *Policy and Politics*, 35(3), pp 437-437, doi: 10.1332/030557307781571579

¹⁷ J. Meagher (2006), "Participation: problems, paradoxes and possibilities", in M. Shaw, J. Meagher and s. Moir (eds), *Participation in Community Development: Problems and Possibilities*, Scotland: Concept and Community Development Journal (CDJ)

¹⁸ OECD (2009), *Focus on citizens: public engagement for better policy and services*, Paris, OECD Publishing

¹⁹ Ibid.

3 Committing to better public participation

3.1 Developing a vision for public participation

For agencies with limited experience of public participation, it may be difficult to envisage and communicate what a robust, integrated public participation approach might look like. Figure 3 below describes how government agencies can move from a traditional, top-down participation approach to a broader and more diverse set of processes that will deliver more participatory outcomes.

Figure 3: Moving to a future state of public participation

FROM	TO	OUTCOME
Citizen participation and collaboration in policy design and development is often limited to specific agencies/specific issues	» More opportunities to influence government policy development and outcomes on a wider range of issues	» Citizens are genuinely involved in making policy decisions that will affect them
Consultation between government and citizens is based on a top-down approach and information flows in one direction	» A meaningful, genuine two-way dialogue where information is shared in both directions	» Government listens to citizens and commits to allowing their input to influence policy development
Citizen engagement is usually reactive; feedback is sought after policies are announced	» Government proactively seeks citizen input into the early phases of policy design and development	» Citizen input influences and shapes policy as it is developed
Communication on how citizen input has influenced policy outcomes is unclear or absent	» Citizens are explicitly informed as to how their feedback has or has not been incorporated into policy design	» Citizen engagement is genuinely sought and transparently received.
Citizen engagement is generally segmented and irregular	» Greater frequency and regularity of opportunities to participate in public deliberation	» Citizen engagement has a more immediate sense of citizen perceptions of policies. More consistent vision of citizens' views
Ways to provide citizen feedback or input into policies are not easy to find	» All agencies are required to seek input into government policies in ways that are easy for citizens to use	» Citizens can easily and intuitively provide feedback on government policies
Some sectors of the community may feel excluded or alienated by government policy decision making processes	» Targeted citizen engagement methods ensure those who may feel disenfranchised are given opportunities to participate and provide input	» All citizens are included in opportunities to influence policy decisions
Methods for citizen engagement are inconsistently implemented across the public sector	» NSW public sector has a more consistent approach to engaging citizens that is built around common standard for managing citizen consultation/participation	» A whole-of-government approach to citizen engagement and growth of collaborative culture is embedded within the NSW public sector
Independent monitoring or general reporting on NSW Government engagement with citizens in policy development is lacking	» Comprehensive and independent reporting of citizen engagement activities is undertaken by NSW Government in policy development	» Greater transparency of the level and nature of citizen engagement activities exists within NSW government agencies

Source: NSW Customer Service Commissioner

3.2 Principles for public participation

The Charter's guiding principles for public participation are based on the core principles and values outlined by the OECD and the IAP2.^{20,21}

CHARTER PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
COMMITMENT	There is a political mandate and support for participation at all levels of government.
RIGHTS	Those who are affected by a decision have the right to be involved in the decision making process, along with the right not to choose not to participate.
TIME	Engagement occurs early in the policy development process before any major decisions are made, preferably at the stage of setting broad direction, principles, and identifying options. There is sufficient time for meaningful participation.
INCLUSION	Those with an interest in the decision have an equal opportunity to participate. Special support is provided for traditionally excluded groups. The widest possible variety of voices is involved.
RESOURCES	Adequate human, technical, and financial resources are available to meet the objectives and implement the results.
CLARITY AND TRANSPARENCY	The purpose of the participation exercise is clearly defined. There is openness about the process and its limitations. All relevant information is provided to participants and is easy to understand.
ACCOUNTABILITY	Participants receive feedback about the outcome of the process and how their input was used.
EVALUATION	The process supports learning and development for participants. The process is evaluated and informs future learning.

3.3 Challenges of public participation

Engaging the public in agency work brings with it a unique set of challenges.²² When planning a public participation activity, developing mitigation strategies for prospective issues is a critical step.

Challenges may include:

- difficulty accessing hard-to-reach community groups
- progress that's slower than expected
- strong opposition from community members
- conflicting opinions across community groups
- engagement fatigue i.e. too much being asked of community participants

²⁰ The full set of OECD principles is included in a number of publications. See for example: [OECD \(2009\), Focus on citizens: public engagement for better policy and services](#), Paris, OECD Publishing

²¹ ["Have your say... but how?" Improving public participation in NSW, NCOSS](#) Research Report, November 2014, University of Sydney – NSW Council of Social Service

²² Based on Glenorchy City Community Engagement Procedure https://www.iap2.org.au/Tenant/C0000004/00000001/files/News/GlenorchyCC_Community_Engagement_Procedure.pdf

- a lack of understanding among participants as to what is being asked of them
- disillusionment and unrealistic expectations i.e. participants feeling unable to make meaningful contributions or influence the decision making process
- uneven weighting among participants, such as large stakeholder groups having undue influence over project outcomes
- poor communication of technical information that can adversely affect engagement outcomes.

Identifying, managing and overcoming these challenges is key to effective public participation. Clear communication between the agency and community members about a project's scope, objectives, timing, participation and feedback channels, as well as clarity around how the agency will integrate the participation and feedback into the project, is also essential to successful public engagement.

As such, agencies should:

- ensure all project information is in plain English and in community languages as appropriate
- offer a variety of communication and feedback channels and methods – i.e. email, face to face, telephone, social media, radio, website with accessibility tools – through which the community can participate
- use stakeholder and agency channels to research critical stakeholder groups and publicise the engagement opportunity
- give community members sufficient notice of project participation opportunities to maximise their chances of getting involved
- identify potential barriers to participation for community members and provide support where possible – for example, offer transport to and from relevant venues, ensure venues are accessible and/or provide childcare options.

4 Implementing public participation

4.1 Defining the purpose and scope of participation

Deciding on and articulating the purpose and scope of a public participation activity is fundamental to its success. As well as guiding an agency's planning, a clear scope helps avoid misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations within the broader community. The approach taken will reflect the scale, focus and timing of the particular initiative or process for which participation is sought.

The benefits of public participation are better realised through implementing the best approach to engagement for the purpose audience and subject matter. For example, would the consequences of a failed policy or service delivery outcome be more costly than the investment required to embed public participation in the development process?²³

According to the IAP2 Public Participation spectrum,²⁴ agencies can provide a range of public participation opportunities:

- those that inform
- those that seek feedback
- those that actively involve and empower the community in the policy development or decision making process.

²³ *Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making*

²⁴ See <https://www.iap2.org.au/About-Us/About-IAP2-Australasia-/Spectrum>

As an agency moves from *inform* through to *empower*, community input has an increasing impact on the project’s outcomes. This spectrum of engagement can be adapted within the agency’s specific engagement framework according to need and resourcing.

Figure 4 below is an example of how the Tasmanian government adapted the IAP2 Public Participation spectrum for use in a local context.

Figure 4: Tasmanian Government adaption of the IAP2 Spectrum

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate/partner	Empower
Community engagement goal				
To provide the community with balanced, objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternative opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	To place the final decision in the hands of the community
Commitment to the community				
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how input influenced the decision	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	We will implement what you decide
Examples				
Websites, fact sheets, letters, media releases, signage and social media	Targeted mail out, feedback, online surveys, submissions and meetings	Facilitated workshops, forums, ideas and issue identification	Partnerships, committees, meetings, grant funding, and reference groups	Citizen juries, co-production, participatory strategic planning, board members

Source: Tasmanian Government Framework for Community Engagement

4.2 Planning to deliver

Once the overall scope and focus of the engagement is decided, the next step is to design its delivery and document the intent in a project plan. See [Appendix 2](#) for some simple templates to assist with this process.

An effective engagement plan that corresponds to an agency’s size and resource capabilities is an important foundation for meaningful public participation and also increases the likelihood of outcomes being achieved within time and cost constraints.

Figure 5 and Figure 6 below provide some guiding questions and tips to help develop an engagement plan.

Figure 5: Building the engagement plan

When developing an engagement plan, consider the following key questions:

- What does the agency want to achieve? (frame the problem).
- How can the agency best achieve it? (plan the project).
- How will the agency be able know if it has been successful? (monitor the outcomes).

The framework can be further developed by considering some or all of the following questions:

- What is the project the agency is seeking to engage on?
- What information is the agency seeking from the community?
- What skills/resources does the agency have available to manage the consultation/active participation?
- What initiatives will the agency use to seek active participation?
- How will the agency communicate the call for active participation to the community?
- How will the community access information that relates to the participation process? What formats will it be provided in?
- What is the timeframe for participation? (has the agency given the participants long enough to get involved?)
- What are the feedback guidelines? (what are the agency's supporting resources to ensure the community understands what they are providing feedback on and how they should provide it?)
- How will the agency evaluate participant feedback?
- How will the agency respond to participant feedback and acknowledge its impact on the project?
- Has the agency researched successful public participation initiatives run by other government organisations? (can the agency leverage off the work already done or the resources of another agency or stakeholder?)

Figure 6: Tips to remember

- Collaborate – work with other agencies and teams who have mutual goals and can leverage each other's resources.
- Take it seriously – active public participation should make a demonstrable impact on the agency's decision making and policy development processes.
- Consider the end user – why should community members seek to engage with the public participation process? Is it worth their time and investment? Is the agency communicating clearly to them about the objectives and what is required?
- Deliver on the promise – provide clear and useful information, interact and seek feedback in a meaningful way, communicate how the community has informed the project and the benefits of their contribution.
- Be timely – work efficiently within your agency while providing sufficient time and opportunities for the community to participate.
- Be creative – consider how the agency can communicate and seek active participation within the constraints of budgets, time and resourcing while still maintaining a clear link to the project's main objective.
- Be objective – hear and consider all the feedback you receive.
- Accept criticism – be open to hearing it, offer channels to accept it, and use it to inform the work.
- Champion from within – mirror the work the agency is doing externally, and engage with and inform the staff within the agency about the initiative for their feedback and buy in.

4.3 Managing risks

As discussed in section 3.3, there can be challenges in successfully implementing public participation.²⁵ Specific risks could include:

- community groups or stakeholders feeling excluded from the engagement process
- community members having different expectations of the consultation processes
- consultation fatigue or low community participation/attendance
- financial challenges, such as budget blowout or cancellation costs
- potential controversy or political sensitivity associated with some proposals
- negative media coverage
- high levels of negative feedback from community.

Prospective risks should first be identified and then monitored, assessed and managed throughout the engagement activity. It is recommended a mitigation plan is developed.

There are a number of tools available to help plan public participation activities – Figure 7 shows an example used by a Victorian council to guide its engagements.

²⁵ Based on an excerpt from the City of Newcastle Community Engagement Framework:
https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Newcastle/media/Documents/Engagements/Comm_Engagement_framework_Final_2.pdf

Figure 7: Glenorchy Council - Getting it done: steps to delivering



Source: [Glenorchy Council](#)

Internationally, the Open Government Partnership has a number of resources that, although pitched at national initiatives, are also applicable for more local or specialised engagements. The OGP guidance on dialogue and consultation is summarised in Figure 8.

Australia is now a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The OGP's first National Action Plan contained a commitment to enhance public participation in government decision making. That commitment has been achieved through the establishment of a new Australian Government framework for public participation and engagement.²⁶

²⁶ <https://ogpau.pmc.gov.au/commitment/52-enhancing-public-participation-government-decision-making>

Figure 8: Open Government Partnership – Insights from Guidance for national OGP dialogue

The Open Government Partnership guidance material for dialogue recommends that the following steps for consultation on national commitments can be adapted for local use:

1. Availability of process and timeline: Countries are to make the details of their public consultation process and timeline available (at least online) prior to the consultation.
2. Adequate notice: Countries are to consult the population with sufficient forewarning to ensure the accessibility of opportunities for citizens to engage.
3. Awareness raising: Countries are to undertake OGP awareness-raising activities to enhance public participation in the consultation.
4. Multiple channels: Countries are to consult through a variety of mechanisms – including online and through in-person meetings – to ensure the accessibility of opportunities for citizens to engage.
5. Breadth of consultation: Countries are to consult widely with the national community, including civil society and the private sector, and to seek out a diverse range of views.
6. Documentation and feedback: Countries are to produce a summary of the public consultation and all individual written comment submissions are to be made available online.
7. Consultation during implementation: Countries are to identify a forum to enable regular multistakeholder consultation on OGP implementation – this can be an existing entity or a new one.



For more details on the OGP Guidance, see:

https://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/OGP_consultation%20FINAL.pdf

4.4 Identifying the right stakeholders

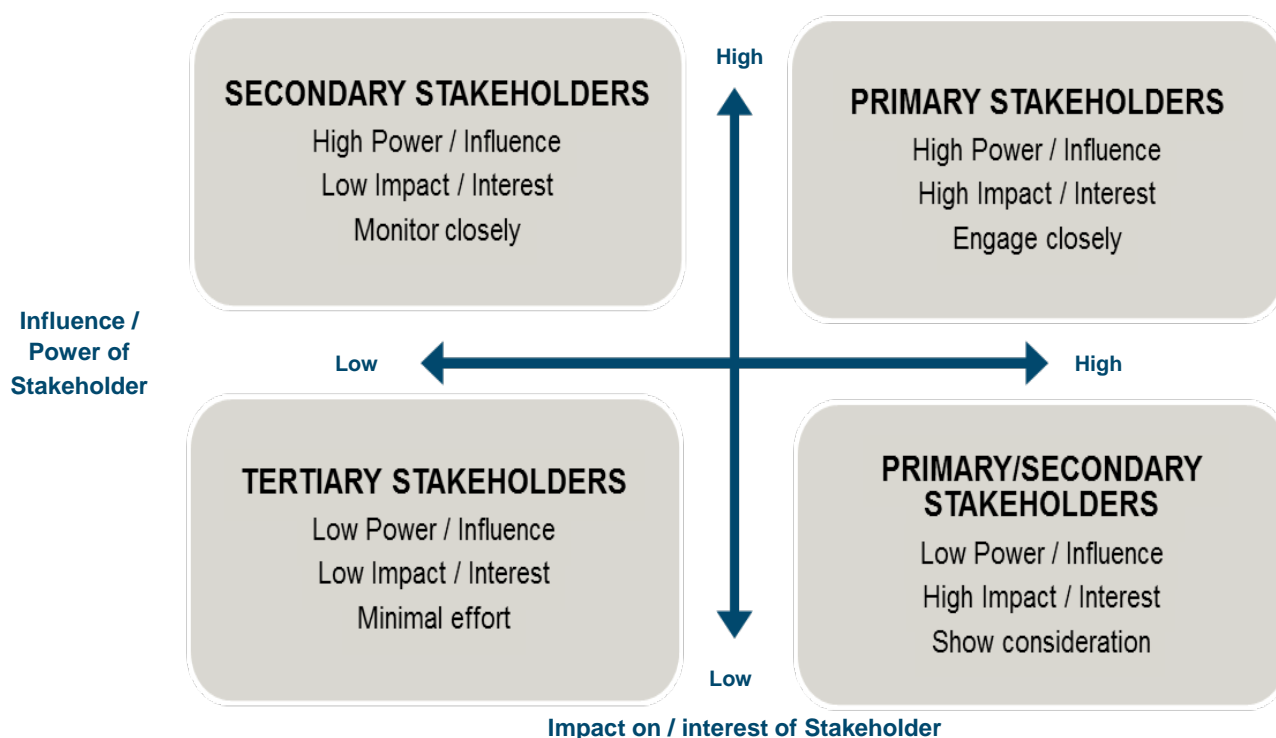
Ideally, anyone who is affected by government policy or decision should have the opportunity to participate in its development. However, in practice, completely open and inclusive participation on every public issue is impossible.²⁷ Agencies should seek to notify a broad cross-section of the community about public participation opportunities, with an emphasis on those most likely to be impacted.

A comprehensive analysis can be a useful tool in identifying stakeholders who are critical to an engagement process. Creating a list of stakeholders can also assist in effective analysis.

The Stakeholder Influence/Interest Grid below can be used as a starting point:

²⁷ "Have your say... but how?" *Improving public participation in NSW*, NCOSS Research Report, November 2014, University of Sydney – NSW Council of Social Service

Figure 9: Stakeholder Influence/Interest Grid



As part of the stakeholder identification process, consider including:

- groups that may be either positively or negatively affected by the issue at hand
- groups that might have significant interest in, or concerns about, the issue
- groups that have legitimacy or expertise to make decisions on the issue
- key members of the community or subject matter experts on the issue
- advocates for, and adversaries against, the issue.

Brainstorming with agency colleagues who are already engaged with the issue under consideration can be useful in identifying critical stakeholder groups. Stakeholder identification and assessment processes should be documented in a stakeholder plan.

4.5 Resourcing the engagement

Effective community engagement relies heavily on appropriate investment of the following resources:²⁸

i) Time

- Consider if there is sufficient time in the project timeline for the engagement process (include required approvals, level of engagement, the engagement methodology and build in contingencies to allow for unforeseen delays).
- Determine if the timeframes are stipulated by legislation for the community engagement.
- Identify any external influences that may cause issues with the date of the engagement (e.g. other community activities, school holidays, public holidays, etc.).

ii) Finances

- Develop a budget to support the community engagement.

²⁸ Based on the Glenorchy City Community Engagement Procedure https://www.iap2.org.au/Tenant/C0000004/00000001/files/News/GlenorchyCC_Community_Engagement_Procedure.pdf

iii) Human resources

- Consider the number of people and skill level required to deliver the community engagement.
- Where necessary, use external consultants or facilitators. For example, if the issue is controversial, an external facilitator may be useful for the purpose of perception management and assurance of fairness.
- Where information contains technical terminologies, arrange for the use of simple explanations. It is recommended that community information be provided in plain English and community languages where appropriate.
- Draw on subject matter expertise where relevant. For example, where community engagement involves media releases, liaise with the agency's communications and marketing team to make sure materials comply with agency standards and branding.

4.6 Engaging online

As with any form of engagement, agencies should be clear on the role online tools will play.²⁹ As one commentator advises:

*Before we talk about how to use social media to enhance public engagement, we need to be clear on the basic approach, the rationale behind it, and the principles on which it rests.*³⁰

Governments are increasingly making use of online engagement tools. Typically, these tools include:

- surveys
- online discussion forums or blogs
- collaboration tools, such as instant messaging
- apps that are relevant to a specific agency program or initiative.

An overarching policy framework can help guide online activities, avoid duplication and manage risks. One example is the Queensland Government's Online community engagement policy - an extract is included on the following page.

²⁹ Much of the material in this section draws on the *New Zealand Online Engagement Community* website at: <https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/>

³⁰ Don Lenihan, *Rescuing Policy: The case for public engagement*, p20 see <http://issuu.com/ppforumca/docs/rescuing-policy/1?e=5463789/2665623>

Figure 10: Extract from the Queensland Government's online community engagement policy³¹

Policy benefits

The online channel is the preferred method for community access to government services and offers many benefits in terms of its reach and ease of access for people who may otherwise not participate in government decision making. Through the application of this policy, the following benefits can be expected:

- Reduced barriers to entry for the use of online consultation by government agencies
- Increased levels of participation by the community in government consultation
- More informed consideration of major public policy by the Queensland Government based on the opinions and perspectives of the broader community
- Increased transparency of the public policy consultation processes of the Queensland Government.

The use of digital tools does not guarantee success or mean that other approaches should be ignored.

While online tools offer many benefits, there are also potential disadvantages involved in their use. Degrees of inclusion, unequal power among participants and between participants and conveners, lack of online civic engagement skills, the influence of social media filters, and lack of civility in online discussions should all be considered as potential barriers to effective engagement online.³²

4.7 Delivering the engagement plan

Once the preparatory steps have been completed, it's time to put the engagement plan to work. Key to the project's success is the agency's ability to continue demonstrating the values of fairness, respect and inclusiveness throughout the process. The agency should consider whether a targeted follow-up engagement is necessary, and how the process for improvement will be monitored.³³

³¹ See <https://www.qgocio.qld.gov.au/documents/online-community-engagement-policy>

³² IAP2 white paper: *Digital Engagement, Social Media & Public Participation*, p2
http://iap2canada.ca/resources/Documents/Newsletter/2017_social_media_white_paper.pdf

³³ Based on the Glenorchy City Community Engagement Procedure
https://www.iap2.org.au/Tenant/C0000004/00000001/files/News/GlenorchyCC_Community_Engagement_Procedure.pdf

5 Maximising and evaluating impacts

5.1 Integrating public participation into the decision making process

For public participation to be meaningful, it is essential that all stakeholders (both internal and external) have a clear understanding of the agency's rationale for public consultation, methods of engagement and expectation of outcomes, as well as an appreciation of how those outcomes will inform options or decisions.

This can be achieved by clearly articulating the objectives of both the project and its public participation activities across all agency channels and throughout the engagement. These mechanisms for public participation should also be included in the AIG.

5.1.1 Clear communication about the process

All communications about public participation processes should include clear information about how the participation processes work and what they're intended to achieve. Key points to consider are:

- the issues being addressed by the public participation process
- the key steps and timing of the process
- at what points public input will be sought and how it will be used
- how the public will be kept informed of the development of options or outcomes throughout the process
- how the agency will evaluate options/solutions generated
- what, if any, options will be developed to achieve the outcomes
- who will make the final decision on the subject of engagement.

5.2 Maintaining engagement throughout the process

In addition to the risk identified in planning the engagement, agencies should be alert to adverse impacts that arise if the process fails to embed effective engagement throughout the various stages of delivery.

Failure to communicate about, or respond to, issues associated with a project has the potential to negatively impact on stakeholders and/or stakeholder relationships. It's important to ensure citizens know they are being heard and that their feedback has been acknowledged in a meaningful way. This is essential to maintaining strong relationships with a community that remains willing to engage with agency projects.

5.2.1 Analysing the feedback

Once an agency has gathered all feedback at the end of an engagement activity, it is essential to:

- identify invalid responses; e.g. duplications and responses from non-stakeholders
- identify any trends
- identify new feedback and previously unknown information
- collectively analyse qualitative and quantitative information
- keep accurate records of the processed and unprocessed responses in line with the agency's information management procedures
- incorporate the analysis into the project report and retain as feedback for future community engagement activities
- adhere to the agency's privacy policy and manage personal information appropriately.³⁴

³⁴ Ibid.

5.3 Evaluating the public participation

Evaluation is the process of defining, measuring and improving the effectiveness of the engagement and is an essential step of public participation activities. Effective evaluation will confirm what has been achieved, key lessons learned and areas that may require improvement in future engagement activities.

Things to consider in your evaluation process:

- **Outcomes** – set clear, measurable outcomes as part of the planning process and seek feedback from participants and other stakeholders (e.g. via surveys) as to whether they were achieved. Did the agency meet the objectives of the engagement? Was the engagement timely, fair and ethical? Was it cost and resource effective?
- **Lessons learned** – review the processes used, acknowledge issues and challenges experienced, and reflect on successes achieved during the process. What should be repeated and what should be changed to improve the process next time?
- **Support** – evaluate the support received from participating agencies during the engagement process and also from the community. Consider the level of support that would be required to repeat the project with improvements applied from the lessons learned.
- **Resourcing** – reflect on the financial and physical resources used – what worked, what didn't? – and identify any resourcing gaps that impacted on the engagement.
- **Tools/channels** – evaluate each tool/channel used during the engagement. Were they used well, easy to access, and well facilitated? Which segments of the community did they reach, what was the level of use, was any negative feedback submitted about any of the tools/channels used during the engagement process?
- **Measures** – some examples of measures include the level of reach; the number of participants; the quantity of feedback received, including the ease with which participants were able to give feedback; and whether timeframes were met. Measurement tools might include email and posted surveys, interviews, website feedback loops, and phone calls.

5.4 Providing feedback to participants

At the end of any engagement activity, it is essential to “close the loop” by providing feedback to participants on how their input has been used. This process can strengthen the relationship between the agency and participants. It also sends a message that the participation was worthwhile, and that the feedback or input received is valued.

When providing feedback:

- thank the participants
- provide information on the process for considering the feedback
- provide information on the outcomes
- let participants know how their views were considered and/or influenced the decision
- give opportunity for further comments.³⁵

³⁵ Based on the Glenorchy City Community Engagement Procedure
https://www.iap2.org.au/Tenant/C0000004/00000001/files/News/GlenorchyCC_Community_Engagement_Procedure.pdf

Acknowledgements

The Charter was developed using a variety of research, experience and best practice drawn from public participation experts at all levels of government both nationally and internationally.

Content for the Charter was drawn from the following resources:

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Appendices

Appendix 1: IAP2 Public Participation Toolbox

(Drawn from the International Association for Public Participation Australasia – <https://www.iap2.org.au/Resources>)

IAP2's Public Participation Toolbox			
Techniques to share information			
Technique	Think it through	What can go right?	What can go wrong?
Bill stuffers			
Information flyer included with monthly utility bill	Design eye-catching bill stuffers to encourage readership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widespread distribution within service area • Economical use of existing mailings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited information can be conveyed • Message may get confused as from the mailing entity
Briefings			
Use regular meetings of social and civic clubs and organisations to provide an opportunity to inform and educate. Normally these groups need speakers. Examples of target audiences: Rotary Club, Lions Club, Elks Clubs, Kiwanis, League of Women Voters. Also a good technique for elected officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KISS! Keep it Short and Simple • Use "show and tell" techniques • Bring visuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of information/presentation • Opportunity to reach a wide variety of individuals who may not have been attracted to another format • Opportunity to expand mailing list • Similar presentations can be used for different groups • Builds community goodwill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project stakeholders may not be in target audience • Topic may be too technical to capture interest of audience
Central information contacts			
Identify designated contacts for the public and media	If possible, list a person, not a position Best if contact is local Anticipate how phones will be answered Make sure message is kept up to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People don't get "the run around" when they call • Control of information flow • Conveys image of accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated contact must be committed to, and prepared for, prompt and accurate responses • May filter public message from technical and decision makers • May not answer many of the toughest questions
Expert panels			
Public meeting designed in "Meet the Press" format. Media panel interviews experts from different perspectives Can also be conducted with a neutral moderator asking questions of panel members	Provide opportunity for participation by general public following panel Have a neutral moderator Agree on ground rules in advance Consider encouraging local organisations to sponsor rather than challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages education of the media • Presents opportunity for balanced discussion of key issues • Provides opportunity to dispel scientific misinformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires substantial preparation and organisation • May enhance public concerns by increasing visibility of issues
<p>An IAP2 tipsheet provides more information about this technique. Tipsheets are included as part of the course materials for IAP2's Techniques for Effective Public Participation.</p>			

Appendix 2: Online and digital tools, case studies and examples

Note: the following resources are intended to demonstrate the breadth of online tools available to promote public participation. All descriptions are sourced from the relevant site/organisation.

NovoView engagement for the upgrade of Wynyard Station, Sydney:

“A project specific smartphone app was designed to promote the finished product and engage with each individual customer. NovoView was developed so that customers and stakeholders could visualise and experience the soon-to-be completed station.” *Winner of a 2017 NSW Premier’s Award*

South Australian Government, Better Together – <http://bettertogether.sa.gov.au/>

“Established in 2013, Better Together is centred on the following six engagement principles to provide a consistent approach across government and to guide best practice:

- We know why we are engaging
- We know who to engage
- We know the history
- We start together
- We are genuine
- We are relevant and engaging

The Better Together program offers public sector employees practical support through advice, training and events, and partnerships to support and deliver innovative engagement techniques and approaches.”

South Australian Government, yourSAy – <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/>

“YourSAy is our online consultation hub where you can have your say and influence government decisions. Some of the ways you can participate include taking part in online discussions, voting in polls, deciding where government funds are spent.”

Participedia – <https://participedia.net/en>

“Anyone can join the Participedia community and help crowdsource, catalogue and compare participatory political processes around the world. All content on Participedia is collaboratively produced and open-source under a Creative Commons License.

Explore: Search, read, download and gain insight from our database of cases, methods, and organizations.

Create: Help improve the quality of this knowledge resource by editing existing content or publishing your own.

Teach: Use Participedia in the classroom as a tool to engage students and showcase their research.”

Engagement HQ – <http://www.bangthetable.com/engagementhq/>

“A complete online community engagement solution with eight feedback tools, a relationship management system, and tailored analytical reporting in a single integrated package.” See also a guide to online consultation at <http://demonstration.engagementhq.com/2636/documents/24399>

Challenge.gov (US) – <https://www.challenge.gov/list/>

“Challenge.gov is a listing of challenge and prize competitions, all of which are run by more than 100 agencies across federal government. These problem-solving events include idea, creative, technical and scientific competitions in which U.S. federal agencies invite the public’s help to solve perplexing mission-centric problems.”

Let’s Talk – <https://lets-talk.ato.gov.au/>

“This site is a space for you to contribute your ideas and have your say on tax and super topics. Your views are important to us and can help to inform and guide decisions made by the ATO. Register now to take part in online engagement activities such as discussions with topic experts. We look forward to hearing your view.”

Engage.dss.gov.au – <https://engage.dss.gov.au/>

“Consultation is important to the Australian Government. Engage.dss.gov.au makes it easier for you to share your views and help shape our policies.”

City of the Gold Coast – <https://www.gchaveyoursay.com.au/>

“GC have your say is home to the City Panel. Join the City Panel now and help drive change in the city by providing feedback on new ideas, projects and priorities.”

PublicVoice – <https://www.publicvoice.co.nz/>

“PublicVoice has worked with local and central government agencies and industry bodies to develop more effective research and engagement strategies.”

Converlens – <https://converlens.com/>

“...a modern discussion & insights platform for government agency engagements that reach the right participants, enable ongoing contributions from the public and subject-matter experts.”

Social Pinpoint – <https://www.socialpinpoint.com/>

“...online tools that improve the way organizations engage with their communities and stakeholders”.

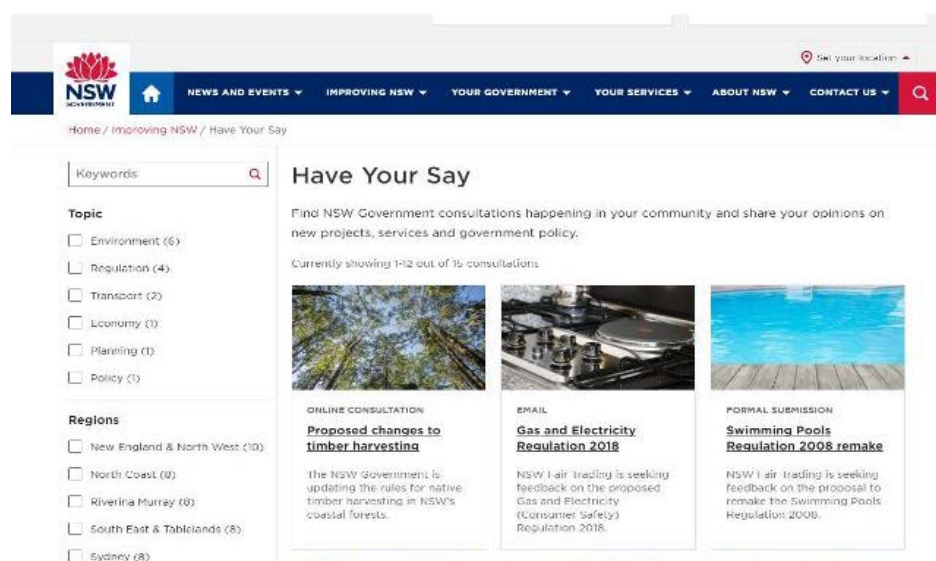
Case Study 1: Have Your Say NSW

Description

- A NSW Government webpage that displays government consultations happening in the community. Citizens are invited to share their opinions on new government projects, services and government policy.
- Acts as a shopfront for public participation. Citizens are redirected to the relevant department/organisation where they can provide feedback or find out how to participate/respond/submit information.

Benefits

- Promotes accessibility by providing a single portal for community-based consultation.
- Facilitates citizen access to a broad range of initiatives, policies and actions by government.



Source: www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/have-your-say

Case Study 2: YourSAy – SA

Overview

- yourSAy³⁶ is an online consultation hub where citizens of South Australia can provide feedback on government policy/programs/services, or on a range of government projects/initiatives.
- Participation methods via yourSAy include online discussions and polls.

Approach

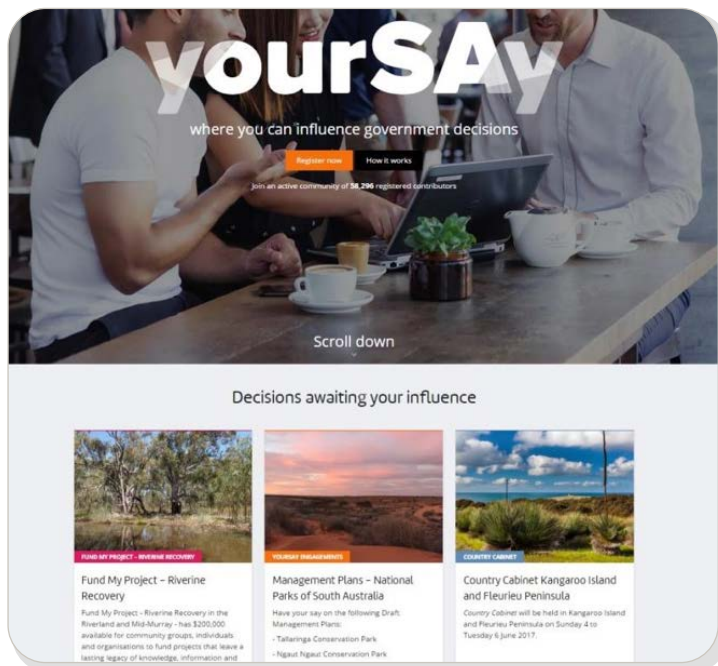
- The website invites feedback on draft strategies and proposals, advertises workshops that tackle social issues in innovative ways, provides opportunities for citizens to speak directly to ministers and other relevant decision makers, and runs Fund My Project/Idea/Community initiatives where community members can apply for funding for their proposals.
- A supplementary yourSAy Twitter account provides frequent updates and information about yourSAy initiatives.

Results

- At present [2018], there were 112,179 registered yourSAy users.

Insights

- yourSAY contains an Outcome tab describes how community feedback has been used to influence government policies and programs.



Source: <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/>

Case Study 3: Social media research study findings

Description

- In a 2015 social media study commissioned by the American Congressional Management Foundation, 76 % of American policymakers reported that social media enabled them to have more meaningful interactions with their constituents. They study found that social media:
 - is a tool that enables ongoing, meaningful and genuine dialogue between citizens and government agencies
 - can be used as a channel for citizens to inform policy and for governments to inform citizens about policy.

Benefits

- Social media is well suited to a changing citizenry. It requires effective and regular monitoring to ensure that it is a responsive channel.
- Social media requires minimum input for maximum output: it is relatively inexpensive to administer and allows governments to reach audiences across the nation at any time.
- It also enables engagement from community members who may otherwise be unable to participate; e.g. older people, people with disabilities, those not confident enough to go to public meetings and those in rural and remote areas.
- Social media has the ability to facilitate real-time listening and monitoring, and to be used as a channel to relay outcomes of policy development processes back to the citizenry.

Outcome

- A two-way dialogue in which citizens can obtain information and provide instant feedback on key issues, considerations and developments relating to policy

development and service delivery, and in which governments can communicate project outcomes and the impact of citizen feedback on policy decisions.

Key considerations

- While social media has broad application in a public participation context, a lack of equal access to digital technologies may inhibit the use of social media as a tool for engaging community members across all demographics.
- Varying levels of digital literacy may affect the degree to which citizens can engage using this channel.
- Given the public nature of social media platforms, privacy and security concerns should also be considered.

Appendix 3: Additional case studies on public participation

These case studies³⁷ outline a range of public participation methodologies and explain the benefits and challenges of each.

Case Study 4: Citizen juries – an engagement option

Description

- Citizen juries involve a representative sample of citizens who are brought together to make democratic decisions on issues that impact on the broader community.
- Convened by a commissioning government agency, a jury might be asked to consider a question of government policy or service delivery. The commissioning agency provides a range of potential solutions, and the jurors determine the most appropriate option for the community.
- The jury delivers their judgement to the commissioning agency in the form of a report.
- The commissioning agency must then follow the report's recommendations or demonstrate why the recommendations were not actioned.

Benefits

- Provides citizens with an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of critical community issues and play a direct role in the decision making process.
- Enables governments to gauge public opinion, draw on public expertise and understand what informed members of the public might regard as realistic solutions to challenges.
- Facilitates engagement with a broad cross-section of the community.
- Can be used to generate wider public debate about the issues.
- Empowers the citizenry through access to knowledge and the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution.
- Achieves tangible results and outcomes.

Outcome

- A considered and representative report with recommendations for future actions or directions.

Key considerations

- Jury members need to be representative of the broader community.
- Citizen juries can require a significant time commitment. Engaging the jury, hiring a facilitator, preparing briefings and background papers, contacting experts, convening the jury and working through the project or issue means a citizen jury process can take days, weeks or even months to complete. The jury also meets on a number of occasions to consider input from experts.
- The process is generally independently facilitated to ensure that the process is well managed and supported.

³⁷ Drawn from collaboration between the IPC and the Office of the Customer Service Commissioner.

- The agency and participants require a clear understanding of results and how they will be used.

CITIZEN JURY EXAMPLE: Obesity, VicHealth

Overview

- Between September and October 2015, VicHealth worked with the newDemocracy Foundation (nDF) to conduct a citizen jury on obesity in Victoria.³⁸
- Comprised of 100 randomly selected Victorians, the jury was asked to respond to the following question: *“We have an obesity problem. How can we make it easier to eat better?”* Jury members were asked to focus their solutions specifically on food and eating habits.

Approach

- The jury initially took part in a six-week online discussion. During this process, they were encouraged to engage with experts and review 64 online submissions from public health advocates, food retailers, industry groups, community organisation and individual community members.
- Following this, 78 members of the jury came together for a two-day forum to determine a set of actions (‘asks’). These asks were influenced by input from experts and from jury members’ shared knowledge on how to encourage healthy eating.

Results

- The jury reached consensus on 20 asks. These were then submitted to a steering group that included representatives from VicHealth, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Australian Food & Grocery Council, Australian Beverage Council and AMA Victoria.
- In December 2015, the steering group responded to these asks by outlining what their organisations were doing to facilitate healthier eating. Both the jury’s report and steering group response were made publicly available online.

Insights

- Credibility, transparency and permission are the essential principles for a citizen jury process, ensuring stakeholders and public are able to trust that the jury is making impartial recommendations.
- Almost two-thirds of participants reported that if another government department commissioned a citizen jury process, they would trust its outcomes.
- Concrete and timely action on any recommendations from citizen juries is essential. Commissioning bodies should ensure that their approach specifies the processes implemented to deliver public accountability for the process, recommendations, commitments and actions.

Case Study 5: Labs

Description

- In the context of public participation, a lab is a creative, multidisciplinary environment where diverse stakeholders engage in a series of workshops to understand complex problems and design new approaches and solutions.

³⁸ <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/victorias-citizens-jury-on-obesity>

- A lab is comprised of a team, a network, a space and a process for tackling complex challenges collaboratively. Labs enable people to meet, interact, experiment, ideate and prototype new solutions.
- Lab participants consider the innovation process to be a professional discipline and not a rare, singular event.

Benefits

- Provides a structured process to approach messy and complex challenges.
- Provides a safe and creative environment to experiment and prototype radical innovations.
- Enables deep collaboration among multidisciplinary teams and diverse stakeholders.
- Takes a user-centred approach and is outcomes focused.
- The iterative process means that outcomes are constantly adapted in response to stakeholder feedback. This ensures a greater acceptance and success of the resulting policy or product.

Outcome

- Solutions that incorporate the expertise and understanding of both specialists and citizens and that have been subject to rigorous interdisciplinary testing.

Key considerations

- The overall success of a lab is contingent on the skills and leadership of a trained facilitator.
- Labs typically target complex problems with a multidisciplinary focus and can comprise participants from a range of sectors, including community, government, business and not-for-profit organisations.

Case Study 6: Deliberative polling

Description

- Deliberative polling was developed by the Centre for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University.
- It involves five steps, which can be summarised as follows:
 1. A random sample of members of the public is selected to participate in the deliberative polling process and given a questionnaire about an issue.
 2. Participants are then invited to take part in a deliberative poll.
 3. Prior to the first meeting, participants receive background information about the issue under consideration. This information is intended to be balanced and fair.
 4. During the meetings, participants are randomly assigned to small groups, each of which is facilitated by a trained moderator. Participants pose questions about the issue under consideration, and collate a list of questions for expert response.
 5. At the conclusion of the expert presentations and group discussions, the questionnaire is administered to the total group again and the opinions are analysed. The resulting changes in opinion are thought to represent the conclusions the public would reach if they were more informed about the issue. Frequently, the results of the questionnaire are released publicly through a media announcement.
- By selecting a random sample of the population, the results of the deliberative polling process can be extrapolated to the community as a whole.

Benefits

- More statistically representative than many other approaches due to its large scale.
- Increases public understanding of the complexity of issues.
- Includes people who would not normally actively choose to get involved in public deliberative processes.
- Demonstrates differences between people's uninformed and informed views.
- Provides an effective means of measuring the diversity of public opinion.
- Provides an idea of the level of local awareness and support for an issue, and creates opportunities for other engagement strategies.

Outcome

- A report that reflects a statistically representative and informed public opinion on an issue or proposal, as well as increased public awareness and understanding of the issue.

Key considerations

- Often requires the use of television to maximise public awareness of the issue in question.
- Does not provide qualitative information.
- Expensive to administer.
- There is arguably less opportunity for participants to identify and engage with experts or determine the scope of the questions than exists for some other approaches (e.g. citizen juries and consensus conferences).

- The process will not necessarily result in consensus of opinion within participant groups.

DELIBERATIVE POLLING EXAMPLE: Community planning, City of Perth

Overview

- Dialogue with the City³⁹ was created in 2003 to engage the citizens of greater metropolitan Perth with a range of challenges that were impacting the city. These included a booming population and record economic growth, which resulted in significant demand on land, resources and the environment.
- Dialogue with the City was designed to make Perth the most liveable city in the world by 2030.

Approach

- A large deliberative forum of participants was convened to determine the common direction. For the next eight months, participants from community, industry and government worked together to develop a community planning strategy.
- During a one-hour prime time television broadcast, a 'hypothetical' was developed to engage citizens who resided in the city. Viewers were encouraged to register for an interactive forum.
- A variety of experts also spoke on radio about sustainability and future planning issues that would have a lasting impact on the city.
- Participants came from state and local government, industry, business, academia, special interest groups and community groups, and included a large random sample of residents from metropolitan Perth.
- More than 250 participants came from the private sector, public sector and non-government organisations, further emphasising the participatory nature of the project.

Results

- An action plan outlining the outcomes of the Dialogue with the City process was developed in response to the consultation. Called *Network City: Community Planning Strategy*, it was accepted in principle by the WA Planning Committee and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.
- An additional \$1.5 million grants program was launched by the Western Australian Planning Commission in May 2004 to help local councils replicate the Dialogue with the City process within their own municipal boundaries.
- Analysis of participant feedback forms pointed to their high satisfaction with the deliberative polling process. Forty-two per cent said their views had changed as a result of the dialogue, while many more admitted to broadening their views. Over 99.5 per cent of participants thought the deliberations went okay or great. Most importantly, 97 per cent indicated they would like to participate in such an event again.⁴⁰
- Dialogue with the City extended participants' understanding of deliberative democracy based on transparency, accountability and the principles of inclusion, deliberation and influence.

³⁹ <http://activedemocracy.net/articles/dialogue-city.pdf>

⁴⁰ Participant Feedback Report, 2003

Insights

- Young adults, Indigenous people and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds were under-represented in the deliberative polling process. Considerable attention was given to ensuring participation was representative of the population, inclusive of diverse viewpoints and values.
- To reinforce the importance of the outcomes and the accountability of the process, each participant received a copy of a preliminary project report at the conclusion of the forum. This report captured the widely-held views developed during the day's proceedings. The final report was distributed to all participants two weeks after the forum. This was an important step in communicating the outcomes of the process to the participants.

Case Study 7: Deliberative mapping

Description

- Deliberative mapping involves both experts and members of the public in a consultative process.
- A sample of the public (around 40 people) from varied backgrounds are recruited onto citizen panels. Subject-matter experts (around 20) are selected to provide specialist input into the consultation process.
- The citizen panels and the experts consider a policy or service issue both separately from one another and at a joint workshop.
- This method combines varied approaches to assess how participants rate different policy options against a set of defined criteria.
- Rather than emphasising the integration of expert and public voices, deliberative mapping aims to understand what each of these perspectives can offer to the policymaking process.

Benefits

- Perspectives are considered opinions rather than articles of faith or rash judgement.
- Provides greater legitimacy for decisions.
- Incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods and can produce both quantitative and qualitative data.
- Specialists share their knowledge without dominating the process.
- Combines different approaches to create a deep and comprehensible understanding of public priorities.
- Obtains information on the different aspects of an issue and the considerations around them.

Outcomes

- A deeper understanding of existing opinions, informed opinions and public preferences towards policy options or a specific policy option.

Key considerations

- Requires significant cost and time commitment.
- Results can contain contradictory views that leave decision makers without clear guidance.
- Very few people have practical experience of running this kind of process.

- Won't deliver a consensus or shared vision for how to address a particular issue or challenge.

DELIBERATIVE MAPPING EXAMPLE: Radioactive Waste Disposal, Committee for Management of Radioactive Wastes (UK)⁴¹

- In 2004, the UK's Government's independent Committee for the Management of Radioactive Wastes (CoRWM) used deliberative mapping as a tool to gauge public perceptions on the issue of radioactive waste management.
- The CoRWM brought together 16 citizens and 9 specialists to consider a range of options to manage the UK's intermediate and high-level radioactive wastes.

Approach

- Held over two weekends, the CoRWM facilitated intensive sessions on radioactive waste management options in the UK.
- Parallel strands of the process engaged radioactive material specialists and citizens with no prior knowledge in this field. Panels of specialists and small groups of citizens followed essentially the same multi-criteria option appraisal procedure.
- A consistent approach was provided to ensure that participants applied the issue identification and evaluation process and were granted substantial opportunities for face-to-face discussion and debate.
- After these deliberative processes, the experts and the citizens agreed that the option of phased underground disposal was the best option to manage radioactive waste.
- CoRWM used the results of the trial to support the development of a nationwide program of public and stakeholder engagement.
- Citizen participants reported a feeling of ownership over the results. They valued the opportunity to learn, access information and meet specialists in order to engage with the issues.
- Specialist participants felt that they learned about the ability of citizens to participate in scientific and technical decision making.

Insights

- CoRWM spent between £80,000 and £120,000 on trialling the deliberative mapping process, plus additional costs associated with paying participants. Based on these trials, the cost of a full deliberative mapping program was found to be prohibitive and was therefore abandoned by CoRWM six months later.

Case Study 8: Appreciative inquiry

Description

- Appreciative inquiry (AI) is based on understanding and appreciating the past as a basis for imagining and achieving future goals.
- It involves the following five step process:
 1. **Define** the topic of enquiry and clarify the scope of the issue to be considered.
 2. **Discover**, through a dialogue between participants, approaches that have been successful in addressing the issue under consideration.

⁴¹ Burgess, J., Chivers, J., et al. (2004). *Citizens and Specialists Deliberate Options for Managing the UK's Legacy Intermediate and High Level Radio-active Waste: A Report of the Deliberative Mapping Trial*, London, DEFRA. Retrieved from: www.corwm.org.uk

3. **Dream** using the past experiences that have been identified as successful to solve or approach the issue under consideration.
 4. **Design** an approach to resolving the issue using the ideal solutions identified.
 5. **Deliver** the design, solution or approach through a process of mapping out the operational process best suited to delivery.
- All questions are designed to encourage people to tell stories from their own experience of what works.
 - By seeing what works and exploring why, it is possible to imagine and construct further success, ensuring that a vision of the future is created with a firm basis in reality.

Benefits

- Utilises direct community involvement and engagement to address social issues.
- Enhances public trust and confidence in the government by building on previous policies that were particularly popular or well-liked by citizens.
- Facilitates the development of partnerships by helping stakeholders to identify shared values, goals and behaviours.

Outcome

- An energised and empowered community with a shared vision for future success and a greater trust that the solution will be effective.

Key considerations

- AI is a philosophy first and a method second, so it can lack strategic direction.
- The lack of direct attention to problems may be viewed as a weakness, but may also be an opportunity for exploration and discovery.
- AI does not specifically target key stakeholders or representative samples but seeks to involve members of a community of interest.
- AI won't deliver direct action unless an explicit action planning element is included in the process.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY EXAMPLE: Community Planning, Ryedale strategic partnership, New Yorkshire, UK⁴²

Overview

- AI has been used in a local authority context by the Ryedale strategic partnership to develop their community strategy.
- In September 2002, an expert group was established with the help of the New Economics Foundation to provide training and guidance. A dozen local activists and council officers were trained in the use of appreciative questions to identify people's values, objectives and hopes for the future.

Approach

- The exercise was branded Imagine Ryedale and involved engaging a wide range of individuals and groups. The aim was to understand their priorities for creating and maintaining a sustainable community.

⁴²<http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/People-and-Participation.pdf>

- The questions were carefully worded to emphasise prospective solutions, rather than focusing on problems. These questions were then used in conversations, meetings, classrooms and on a designated phone-in line.
- Following this, the core group read 430 scripts and drew out the recurring themes and issues. This process culminated in the drafting of vision statements around six identified themes.
- Next, the vision statements were taken back to those who had been involved in the process, giving them the opportunity to make changes before the vision became a part of the community plan.

Results

- The final output was an agreed vision of Ryedale's community plan that represented the community's collective desires and aspirations. Participants were also given a chance to comment on the draft version before the plan was finalised.

Insights

- The questions used to lead the consultative sessions were designed to encourage people to tell stories from their own experience of what works.

Case Study 9: Democs

Description

- Democs is a conversation game that enables small groups to discuss public policy issues using pre-prepared cards. It has been described as collective learning that provides an opportunity for participants to gain a greater appreciation of facts and perspectives regarding significant and complex issues.
- These cards provide facts and information about a range of subjects, including animal experimentation, climate change, vaccination policy and stem cell research;⁴³ therefore, the process can operate in the absence of experts.
- Democs is dependent upon participation by those interested on a specific issue, rather than through random selection.
- The game is used to help citizens gain greater understanding of an issue, form and share their opinions with others, and potentially reach an agreed policy position.
- It is usually played by small groups over a two-hour period. Participants reflect on their dealt cards and choose one or two that they feel are most important. They then take turns to read them out, explaining why they chose them. Next, they cluster the cards, with each cluster representing a key issue relating to the topic.
- Once they have voted on a range of responses, solutions or policy positions, participants try to create a final response that everyone in the group accepts as a viable and sustainable solution.

Benefits

- Democs is applicable to any issue and can be adapted to address a wide range of policies.
- It encourages people to form an opinion on complex topics and empowers them to believe that they have a right to a say.

⁴³ <http://participationcompass.org/article/show/145>

- It seeks to stimulate individual engagement through the use of cards and avoid the lecture style approach of expert opinion.
- Generating ideas in the absence of experts also encourages inexperienced participants to get involved.
- The game format helps people to enjoy themselves while they talk.
- It is inexpensive to run and is not resource intensive.

Outcome

- Information about participants' common ground, opinions and preferences, as well as a citizenry that feels more informed, involved and consulted.

Key considerations

- Works best with a facilitator to lead the proceedings.
- Establishing common ground amongst all participants is not possible within a single game.
- Because it is based upon participation by interested individuals, broader representation is hard to achieve.
- The game concept and direct advocacy by participants can of itself create conflict or tension between participants.
- It is difficult to feed the results of a Democs process directly into decision making processes.
- Doesn't deliver follow-up or tangible outcomes to people who have taken part.

DEMOCS EXAMPLE: Genetic testing, Human Genetics Commission (HGC), UK⁴⁴

Overview

- In 2003, a Democs exercise was conducted for the Human Genetics Commission to explore the issue of over-the-counter genetic testing kits.

Approach

- Forty-seven people attended six events organised by the New Economics Foundation. Fourteen were members of the HGC Consultative Panel and the rest were recruited through promotion in media/journal articles and existing networks.
- Following individual assessment by participants, each group clustered the issue cards in groups that represented a key issue or fact relating to the topic. Additional cards related to the issue were also identified and grouped to provide further information to support the approach recommended by the group.
- Twenty-one main arguments were developed, with the highest number of responses concerning the impact of a test on the recipient and her/his family.
- A card that was frequently chosen said, '*Tests that are unreliable or misinterpreted may cause needless anxiety, especially if no counselling is available.*' This was what pushed many people towards the option of supporting considerable regulation, with 41 out of 47 votes for 'acceptable' or 'support' for greater regulation of genetic testing kits.

⁴⁴ <http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/People-and-Participation.pdf>

- This position is what the HGC recommended to the government.

Insights

- Democs can be used to canvas the opinions of the general public, or to target specific individuals, such as experts. In this example, experts from the Human Genetics Commission were included to provide direct expert input.

Case Study 10: Participatory strategic planning

Description

- Participatory strategic planning (PSP) is a consensus-building approach to community or organisational development. The consensus workshop process involves communities or work groups brainstorming to generate ideas, clustering to explore the insights that emerge, identifying obstacles, and ultimately determining the consensus of the group in each cluster.
- It involves one or two trained facilitators, groups of between five and 50 people, and four stages:
 1. The group determines their vision for the future of the organisation or community.
 2. They articulate the contradictions or obstacles that are preventing them reaching their vision.
 3. They agree on strategic directions that will help them get past the obstacles and achieve the vision.
 4. They make a detailed plan for how their vision will be implemented in the first three months, and then in the first year.⁴⁵

Benefits

- Flexible and applicable to a wide range of policy issues.
- Enables an incremental and organic approach to the development of a vision.
- Works well with a mixed group of participants from all levels of a community or organisation.
- Provides an efficient way to reach agreement within a diverse group on feasible community solutions.
- Is an inclusive process that provides input and techniques using a combination of auditory and visual aids such as diagrams, images or sound to describe a possible outcome.
- Participants often find the process and outcome inspiring and empowering.

Outcome

- A strategic vision of, and commitment to, community or organisational development based on participant preferences and priorities.

Key considerations

- Is highly contingent upon the skills of trained and experienced facilitators.
- Requires buy-in and commitment beforehand from people in power.
- Requires participation of those with an interest in the outcome.

⁴⁵ <http://participationcompass.org/article/show/150>

- Is generally a two-day event with a recommended follow-up after six months; therefore, requires a lengthy commitment from participants both on the day and subsequently. Further, results may be iterative rather than instant.

PARTICIPATORY STRATEGIC PLANNING EXAMPLE: Waste removal policy, Vitoria, Brazil⁴⁶

Overview

- The residents of Territorio de Bem in Vitoria, Brazil used PSP to solve the region's waste disposal problem, promote environmental education, and gain new space for recreation.
- Territorio de Bem is an urban area of 31 000 low-income residents where informal dumping of waste was a serious problem.

Approach

- The community council, supported by the NGO Ateliê de Ideias, volunteers and members of local government, used PSP to:
 - mobilise the population and the Forum Bem Maior (forum for residents)
 - carry out environmental training in the area
 - consult with solid waste removal companies and government departments
 - mobilise local government departments to provide services that assisted the initiative.

Results

- The process resulted in a participatory waste removal policy being developed by local government. Activities resulting from the policy were to be monitored by the government, community council and local residents.
- One hundred and sixty-five people participated in the PSP process, including students and volunteers from businesses, the private sector and international organisations.
- As a result, 216 informal dumps were mapped, 2173 homes were trained in environmental protection, 1450 trash bins were distributed, six plots of land were cleared up, and two dumping grounds areas transformed into recreational areas.

Insights

- A large portion of necessary equipment was donated by private companies and local government departments.
- PSP as a social technology received an award from the UNDP and President of Brazil for its contribution towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

⁴⁶ <http://gndr.org/learning/resources/case-studies/case-studies-afl-2011/item/1587-participatory-strategic-planning-for-waste-removal-brazil.html>

Case Study 11: Participatory appraisal

Description

- Participatory appraisal (PA) is a broad empowerment approach that strives to build community knowledge and encourage grassroots action. It was developed for use in rural development in the third world, although it has since been applied in a range of communities.
- It is centred on a local community approach and based upon the belief that local priorities should be the starting point for any local planning and action. Accordingly, it assumes that community members are experts in their own lives and their input is key to resolving local issues.
- PA employs a lot of visual methods – for example, diagrams and mapping exercises – which make it especially useful for participants who find other methods of participation intimidating or complicated.
- It uses a range of approaches that enable local people to identify their own priorities and make their own decisions about the future, with the organising agency facilitating, listening and learning. Techniques include democratic decision making and action planning.
- PA is governed by 10 principles:
 1. It's community led.
 2. It's a process, not a single event.
 3. It's inclusive.
 4. It's participant owned rather than facilitator driven.
 5. It's sequential – each step leads to the next.
 6. It's adaptable, using diverse methods to respond to participant need. It uses visual depictions rather than written descriptions.
 7. It's rigorous and ethical, testing participants' assumptions throughout the process.
 8. It's action oriented – outcomes must improve the lives of the local community members.
 9. It empowers disadvantage by engaging people who aren't traditionally involved in decision making processes.
 10. It's flexible and adaptable – it can be applied in a wide range of settings, and can deliver solutions to a wide range of people.
- The start of a PA process is usually focused on mapping or visually describing an issue and its prospective outcomes. As the process develops, participants start finding common ground; eventually, this can lead to new plans being developed and implemented. Outsiders – technical advisors or decision makers with information that's key to action planning – can be brought in to discuss and negotiate issues.

Benefits

- Can be extremely inclusive, flexible and empowering if run well.
- The knowledge produced by local community researchers has been proven to be highly reliable. In particular, the mapping process can help to identify underlying problems, rather than just the symptoms.
- In circumstances where local community members have been trained to facilitate a PA process, this capacity remains within the community for the future.

- PA is a creative and flexible approach that can complement and draw on other techniques throughout a process, such as focus groups or participatory arts and creative techniques.

Outcome

- Consensus and actions to achieve a shared vision based on reliable and valid mapping of local knowledge and priorities.

Key considerations

- Critical need for training and experience among those running the process.
- Can be expensive to set up and may require a significant preparation to ensure full engagement throughout the process.
- Requires ongoing events to be truly effective, which may be difficult to fund and organise. However, collating material from numerous events can be challenging and time consuming.
- As it's a process, rather than a single event, PA will not deliver quick results.

PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL EXAMPLE: Community priority setting, Walsall Participatory Appraisal Network, UK

Overview

- PA was used in Walsall in 1997 with a group of young people to address significant sexual health issues. Walsall was recognised as one of the most disadvantaged areas of the UK.⁴⁷
- In 1998, following the success of the 1997 PA, the Walsall Participatory Appraisal Network was developed.
- The network employs one full-time network co-ordinator and has over 400 people from a variety of professional areas trained in PA methodology. Additionally, the network has trained over 160 people in delivering the methodology to address community problems across key areas, including regenerating the economy; raising educational standards through lifelong learning; improving health, wellbeing and social care; and enhancing community safety.

Approach

- No two PAs are ever the same – the approach can be adapted to a wide range of issues, such as education, health, or working with young people.
- Some tools and techniques participants use include:
 - **mapping:** to explore which resources are important to community members in their environment
 - **timelines:** to examine the influences that change people's lives over time and to observe short-term and long-term issues
 - **spider diagram and impact analysis:** to look at the root cause of an issue to better understand cause and effect
 - **prioritisation and action planning:** to help people make judgments, compare options, collectively agree on priorities and create an action plan

⁴⁷ <http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/People-and-Participation.pdf>

- **evaluation:** to assess against a criterion that is developed in a participatory way and focused on specific action that can be implemented in the community. The simplest of these is by a process of scoring.

Results

- Walsall has used the PA approach in over 30 consultancy projects, supporting a number of organisations and initiatives to engage with customers, members, community or staff.
- It has become mainstreamed into significant areas of service provision and decision making.
- Participants noted that they felt empowered to make their own decisions on issues affecting their lives.

Insights

- PA has been particularly useful in tackling serious issues of vulnerability, deprivation and exclusion in pockets of poverty and disadvantage.
- Good partnerships are instrumental in supporting the development of the network from idea to implementation.
- Trainers need highly developed inter-personal and professional skills to develop links and manage partnerships.

Appendix 4: Templates for planning public participation

The contribution of the Douglas Shire Council *Community Engagement Guide and Tools* to this section is noted.

Public Participation Engagement Plan			
Project title:			
Project manager:			
Start date:		Finish date:	
Background information:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content here about project background 			
Brief description of project:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content here about project background 			
Project team:			
Name:	Position:	Contact	Responsibility:
Define engagement objectives:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content here about engagement objectives 			
Define engagement scope:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content here about engagement scope <p><i>(Be clear about what is “in scope” and what is “out of scope”)</i></p>			

Key project messages:

- List key messages

Budget:

Description	Amount
TOTAL:	\$

Stakeholder analysis

Internal stakeholders

Unit/work area	Name/position	Reason (why a stakeholder)	Level of engagement	Methods to engage	Method for feedback
			e.g. inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower		

External stakeholders

Name/group	Reason (why a stakeholder)	Level of engagement	Methods to engage	Method for feedback
		e.g. inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower		

Phases to engagement

Stages	Description	Comments
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe action to be undertaken 	
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe action to be undertaken 	
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe action to be undertaken 	

Internal engagement action plan

Project phase	Stakeholder	Level of engagement	Method to engage	Key messages	Responsibility	Timing
Stage 1						
Stage 1						
Stage 2						
Stage 2						

External engagement action plan

Project phase	Stakeholder	Level of engagement	Method to engage	Key messages	Responsibility	Timing
Stage 1						
Stage 1						
Stage 2						
Stage 2						

Monitoring and evaluation

Stakeholders	Engagement activity	Measures	Indicators

Stakeholder list

Organisation/association	Name	Phone	Email	Comments
e.g. staff, community group, agencies, departments, NGOs etc				

Appendix 5: The IPC's work on public participation

In September 2015, the NSW Information Commissioner announced a commitment to embedding public participation in NSW Government activities. This commitment is framed by the Charter

The IPC commenced the development of a Charter that was informed by the work of other jurisdictions, with a particular emphasis on the Victorian Auditor General's Report.

The aim of this Charter is to encapsulate the government's commitment to the principles of Open Government. As well as supporting public participation, it identifies a range of theoretical and technical tools for effective public participation, and also supports NSW Government agencies to maintain compliance with the GIPA Act.

To inform the development of the Charter, the IPC:

- trialled a platform to canvass the views of the public on approaches to public participation
- conducted desktop research to identify and, where possible, monitor current practices in public participation. This research included a particular focus on engagements reported through AIGs that enabled members of the public to participate in the formulation of agency policy and the exercise of agency functions
- highlighted some of the resources being used across Australia and internationally that could assist agencies to deliver effective public participation programs
- published the report [Towards a NSW Charter for Public Participation](#) on the development of the Charter. The report provides:
 - the NSW context for public participation
 - findings of the desktop monitoring of the AIGs of principal departments
 - insights from the IPC's trial of an online consultation platform
 - a sample of Australian and international resources to support public participation.

Following this work, the IPC commenced the development of the Charter, which included the following steps:

- Reviewed Australian and international literature and guidance on public participation, including best practice frameworks in other jurisdictions and performance audits.
- Consulted with public participation experts and participated in workshops for the development of a Commonwealth best practice engagement framework.
- Sought feedback on the utility of a charter from agencies and the community via Have Your Say and an anonymous online survey. The responses highlighted the need for transparency, accessibility, accountability and having community input into design and promotion. Specifically, public participation activities were high on the agenda for most people.

This is the first published version of the Charter. It aims to guide the NSW public sector in more meaningful engagement and promote Open Government. It is available on the IPC

website and is actively promoted to NSW public sector agencies as a guide for embedding public participation into decision making and service delivery.

The Charter will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant to the NSW public sector. Feedback from NSW public sector agencies, industry and the community is welcomed.



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