

practical techniques & tools for engaging community

NOTES FOR FACILITATORS



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1. Introduction

This *Handbook* seeks to provide a summary of the variety of techniques and tools available to facilitators to engage community members and residents in participatory engagement processes that enable their meaningful contribution to opportunities, issues and challenges related to community life.

Such processes often involve community members and residents in activities aimed at:

- information discovery and exchange;
- asset, issue and opportunity identification, and
- consensus negotiation and prioritisation of possible options, strategies and actions.

There is a wide range of methods and tools that can be employed – each has its value and limitations. Selection and combination needs to depend on specific purpose(s) for community engagement, extent of financial and technical resources for the exercise and available timeframe. Obviously, a combination of methodologies enriches the community engagement process.

Community engagement is not a public relations exercise – it is not about a group or institution deciding what to do and then trying to convince community members and residents that it is the best option. Effective community engagement must be an interactive process involving dialogue, information sharing and decision making.

Finally, there are three fundamental principles for meaningful community engagement, namely:

- maximisation of community involvement, interaction and ownership of the process and its outcomes;
- recognition of the stakeholder diversity of values, ideas, capacities and opinions that exist within any community; and
- creation of meaningful conversation to ensure a two-way flow of information and learning.

‘I work from the firm belief that “whatever the issue, community is the answer’.
(Margaret Wheatley)

‘Engagement is figuring things out together’.
(Vince Varian)

‘Best practice engagement involves the interplay between three elements – capacity building, relationship development and decision making’.
(Energy Networks Association)

2. Key Concepts and Definitions

There are a variety of concepts and terms that are often used in reference to community engagement and consultation. The following are provided to assist definition.

i. Community

Community is an umbrella term with different meanings.

'A group of people connected by place or sharing and having certain attitudes and interests in common. A sense of attachment is an important element'. (Bank of I.D.E.A.S)

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

(Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria)

'A group of people with something in common who consider they have some connection. Community suggests some form of commonality, whether it be geographic (e.g., neighbourhoods), interest (e.g., communities of practice), a community of identity (e.g., the gay and lesbian community) or virtual (e.g., online communities). Community also suggests boundaries (often self-defined) creating the sense that some people are part of a community and some are not'. (Graeme Stuart)

ii. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)

ABCD is a development framework which seeks to create strong, connected and inclusive communities by focusing on actions led by citizens. In these communities, starting with assets, capacities and possibilities, rather than needs and deficiencies is paramount. It shifts the conversation from services delivered 'to' and 'for' community to a conversation about what is possible 'of', 'by' and 'with' the community.

iii. Stakeholders

Those individuals, groups or organisations with an interest or concern in the issue.

iv. Community Engagement

The terms participation, consultation and engagement are often used interchangeably. They are related but have distinct meanings.

Engagement: to establish meaningful contact with someone or become involved in something. This is a broad term that encompasses a range of activities from information provision through to collaboration and partnership. (Oxford Dictionary)

'Community engagement involves facilitating full understanding by community residents of what is happening in their community, soliciting their opinions and ideas, mobilising their active participation and promoting recognition of the choices they have in achieving the future community they desire'.
(Bank of I.D.E.A.S.)

"Engagement" is used as a generic, inclusive term to describe the broad range of interactions between



people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery, consultation, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowered action in informal groups or formal partnerships'.

(Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria)

v. Public Participation

Public: A collective term for the people of an area as a whole.

Participation: To be involved or take part in something. It implies an interactive process with a level of collaboration and shared ownership or responsibility. (Oxford Dictionary)

'Public participation is the involvement of those affected by a decision in the decision – making process'.
(Victorian Audit-General's Office)

vi. Community Consultation

Consultation: To seek information or advice from someone. While consultation is also considered a two-way process, it generally implies less influence and control than participation. (Oxford Dictionary)

'Consultation is about involving community members in decision making in a structured and rigorous way. Information is exchanged, concerns, issues and opportunities identified and responded to, and in many cases positions and consensus negotiated'. (Sheridan Coakes)

vii. Facilitation

'To make easy, promote, help forward an action or result, to remove difficulty, promote ease or readiness with aptitude, dexterity or fluency'. (Dictionary definition)

Key Facilitation Roles:

- Create an atmosphere of energy, excitement and optimism.
- Demystify concepts, processes and strategies.
- Optimise the knowledge and expertise of participating groups/individuals.
- Broker experiences, models, methodologies, networks and resources that may be relevant.
- Encourage collaborative efforts between relevant groups and networks. (Bank of I.D.E.A.S.)

viii. Conversation

'Conversation is the most basic community development tool we possess. Conversation has always been the fundamental community building process we have used to share knowledge and ideas. When you have a conversation with another person or a group of people, you listen closely and respond appropriately, so that your conversation is a true exchange of ideas, not just people waiting for their turn to talk. A good conversation makes you feel heard, satisfied, and more informed.' (Bank of I.D.E.A.S)

'Creating a positive future begins in human conversation. The simplest and most powerful investment any member of a community or an organisation may make is to begin taking with other people as though the answers mattered'. (William Greider)

'The power of being heard is a wondrous thing'. (Mike Mather)

'One of the things we need to learn is that every great change starts from very small conversations held among people who care'. (Margaret Wheatley)

3. Key Guiding Principles of Effective Community Engagement

Guiding principles are the fundamental, moral and ethical beliefs that underpin any strategy or methodology. As core values, they help to define the boundaries for engagement conduct, act as driving forces for project outcomes and help foster trust and collaboration amongst all stakeholders and participants. Based upon successful community engagement strategies across the globe, the following seven principles are recommended for adoption; namely –

- **Genuine Commitment to, and Valuing of Community Input:** all community stakeholders have access to relevant and credible information related to engagement goals, plus practical support to enable them to genuinely and strategically engage in conversations and option decision-making.
- **Inclusive Participation:** respect for, and creation of opportunities for the perspectives of all community stakeholders to be freely and fairly expressed and heard; opposing all forms of discrimination whether based on ability, ethnicity, age, gender, social circumstances or sexual preference.
- **Dialogue:** Commitment to a genuine conversation and a two-way exchange of information and learning.
- **Integrity and Transparency:** openness, honesty and consistency about the scope, limits and purpose of the community engagement processes.
- **Trust and Respect:** provision of adequate time and space to build strong relationships, trust and confidence with community stakeholders.
- **No 'one size fits all' Approach:** provision of adequate time, skill and resources to develop the best engagement methodologies appropriate to place, engagement goals and diversity of community stakeholders.
- **Feedback:** '*closing the loop*' and engaging in reporting back to community and evaluation of efforts.

4. Steps in Successful Community Engagement

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in their resource – *Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit* has provided an excellent seven step process framework; namely –

Step 1: Purpose

Having a clear purpose helps focus goals and maximise the impact of engagement activities. To clarify the purpose, DHHS identifies important five sub-steps; namely-

1. **Define the purpose** - the reason for undertaking engagement. This may involve outlining the problem/issue you are trying to address, the decision you wish to reach or the relationships you wish to build.
2. **Define the objectives** - the desired outputs of your engagement process. Are you trying to reach a certain decision or hoping to gather feedback on a proposal?
3. **Project objectives vs. engagement objectives** - objectives may vary for each stage of the project and may differ from the overall project objective.
4. **Outline the scope and limitations** - your engagement process will necessarily be limited by a range of factors. These may include time, staff, transport, funding and stakeholder capacity.
5. **Identify negotiable and non-negotiable elements** - each engagement project will have a set of factors or decisions that can be influenced by stakeholders and a set that cannot. This identification will allow participants to understand what they can influence.

DHHS provide a useful set of **key questions** that enable understanding of the underlying purposes of a specific engagement exercise; namely:

- Why do you need to engage?
- Will you need to engage in more than one way?
- What will success look like?
- What engagement skills do you have within your team? What skills need developing?
- What are your limitations?
- What resources do you have available?

Step 2: Stakeholder Identification

Clear stakeholder identification will help in making informed decisions about who to engage with and how best to do so. In the stakeholder identification process, one must also consider the level of influence of the stakeholder or stakeholder group and their capacity for committing to the engagement exercise.

As mentioned above in *Guiding Principles*, inclusive participation is fundamental to effective engagement. All communities are diverse and include people of different backgrounds, values,

contributions, needs and aspirations. It is important to not only engage with your high influence stakeholders, but to enable participation from participants who may not be frequently heard or who may be harder to reach.

Fostering inclusiveness and valuing difference also involves the tailoring of engagement processes to enable diverse communities and individuals to fully participate.

DHHS advocate careful consideration be given to the following:

- the needs and capacities of your stakeholders;
- engagement approaches that are responsive to diverse needs, communication and cultural preferences;
- barriers to stakeholder involvement and strategies to address them;
- resources, mentoring or training that may be required to enable certain people to participate;
- identification of participants who have been traditionally excluded from the process;
- use of a variety of communication methods to engage harder to reach groups.

DHHS again provide a useful set of **reflective questions** relating to stakeholder identification; namely –

- Who are the stakeholders that are critical to the issue/theme?
- Who will be impacted by the issue/theme?
- Who has an interest in the issue/theme?
- How can you ensure your engagement is inclusive?
- What are your possible participant capacities, needs and limitations?
- Who are the stakeholders who have been traditionally excluded from decision making?
- How can you address the barriers to different stakeholders engaging?

Step 3: Level of Participation

Once a clear purpose has been defined and your community stakeholders identified, it is important to consider which level of participation your engagement exercise requires.

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

This *Handbook* endorses the *International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum* as the theoretical basis for stakeholder engagement. *The IAP2 engagement spectrum* represents the most widely accepted and used participation model across government, business, local government and the community sectors. The *Spectrum of Public Participation* was developed to help clarify the role of the public (or community) in planning and decision-making, and how much influence the community has over planning or decision-making processes.

It identifies five levels of public participation (or community engagement); namely –

Inform – providing information to participant stakeholders.

Consult – obtaining stakeholder feedback on alternatives for potential courses of action or decisions made.

Involve – working directly with participant stakeholders to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and reflected in proposals or policy.

Collaborate – partnering with community stakeholders at each stage of a project.

Empower – placing final decision making in the hands of the stakeholder community.

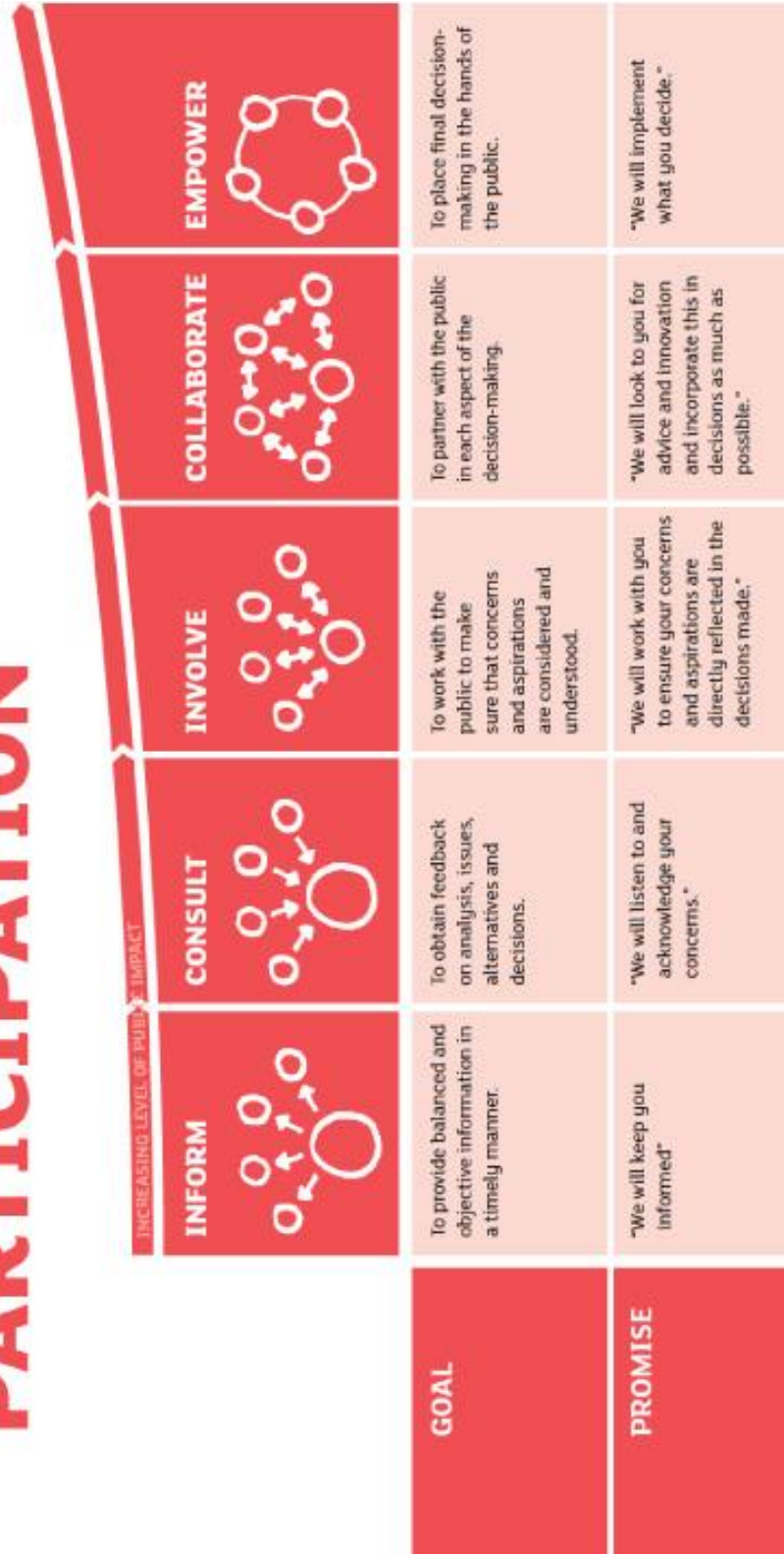
To determine the appropriate level of participation, DHHS believe the following need to be considered:

- **Purpose:** your reasons for engaging and the results you hope to achieve will help to determine which level of participation is appropriate. If your engagement initiative aims to implement decisions made by your stakeholders, then a high degree of participation may be required. However, if your project simply aims to keep the public informed, then a lower level of participation may be appropriate.
- **Stakeholders:** different community stakeholders will have different needs, expectations and capacity. These factors need to be considered in determining an appropriate level of participation, choice of methodologies and resourcing required for engagement.
- **Resources and Timeframes:** the resources and timeframes available to you will have a significant impact on the level of engagement you can realistically achieve.

The further to the right on the Spectrum, the more influence the community has over decisions. However, each level can be appropriate depending on the context. It is important to recognise they are levels; not steps or stages. The Spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of concern in the decision to be made. However, and most importantly, the Spectrum articulates the public participation goal and the promise being made to the public at each participation level. For larger, more complex engagement initiatives, or those with multiple community stakeholders, it is likely that a variety of different methods across the levels to engage different groups will be required.

The diagram below illustrates the IAP2 Spectrum.

IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



Step 4: Develop an Engagement Plan

In the engagement planning process, it is important to tailor your approach and design an *Engagement Plan* to address your engagement goal(s) and meet stakeholder needs and expectations. As community stakeholders may have differing capacities and aspirations regarding participation, a tailored approach will help accommodate and encourage diversity in participants. *The Engagement Plan* needs to include appropriate tools and mechanisms to ensure equitable processes for all stakeholders and transparent decision making. See *Section 5: Community Engagement Tools* below for the full range of possibilities.

A typical *Engagement Plan* according to DHHS should be a live document and include:

- purpose
- objectives
- stakeholders
- level of participation
- commitment to your stakeholders
- engagement tasks, methodologies and tools
- timeframes
- roles and responsibilities
- budget
- resourcing
- limitations
- risks
- feedback plan
- evaluation plan.

The **key questions** identified by DHHS are:

- Is the *Engagement Plan* purposeful, prepared, genuine, inclusive and communicative?
- Are your timeframes and resources realistic?
- Are you engaging early enough in the process?
- Have you established clear parameters with your stakeholders around their level of involvement?
- Do you have the resources to undertake the chosen engagement methods?

Engagement Risks

DHHS identify the following as the common risks in stakeholder engagement:

- Stakeholder expectations are not met or do not match engagement objectives.
- Stakeholders do not have adequate time to participate, especially when timeframes are tight.
- Certain stakeholders are '*over consulted*'.
- Key stakeholders are excluded from engagement.
- Stakeholders believe engagement activities are tokenistic or shallow.

- The purpose and objectives of the engagement are not clear.
- The *Engagement Plan* fails to take account of the history or previous relationships with stakeholders.
- The *Engagement Plan* ignores ethical principles and responsibilities.

Step 5: Implement and Monitor Engagement

It is vital that the engagement process reflects the engagement principles outlined in *Section 3* above and achieves genuine dialogue and input with community stakeholders. It is important to ensure all engagement staff/volunteers are well versed in the *Engagement Plan* and understand their roles in delivering it. It is also important to communicate clearly with community stakeholders during the implementation process. Ensure community stakeholders are provided with clear and consistent messaging on the process and their role within it.

During your engagement you should also monitor the implementation of individual engagement tasks as detailed in your *Engagement Plan*, especially for larger engagement projects. By monitoring your *Engagement Plan* you can better manage risks, address issues as they arise, and anticipate or communicate any significant delays.

Key questions suggested by DHHS:

- Are all engagement staff/volunteers well versed in the *Engagement Plan* and their role in delivering it?
- Do you have adequate resources organised to implement your *Engagement Plan*?
- What processes have you put in place to obtain and respond to early feedback from community stakeholders?

Step 6: Feedback

As indicated in the above *Engagement Principles*, once your engagement activities are complete, it is important to provide meaningful feedback to your community stakeholders about how their input and feedback has been used. Reporting back on the stakeholder engagement process will ensure that stakeholders feel that their contributions have made a difference to the outcome of the initiative. This in turn encourages community stakeholders to want to participate in the future.

Reporting back could be done by providing participants with written feedback, by holding feedback sessions or forums, or by using print and digital communication. Whatever the method, it is important you take every opportunity to provide feedback to your stakeholders. A The diverse needs and capacities of your community stakeholders need to be considered in providing feedback.

Key questions suggested by DHHS:

- What input did your community stakeholders have and how was it used?
- How will you provide feedback to participants?

- What communication methods will you use?
- How will you communicate your engagement process or project's outcomes, successes and learnings?

Step 7: Evaluate

All engagement processes should conclude with an evaluation to measure how effective the *Engagement Plan* was in achieving its objectives, and to capture the lessons learned during the initiative. Evaluating engagement processes will inform and improve future practice, engagement policy development and increase the organisation's evidence base. This will be beneficial to both the organisation and to our stakeholders.

To measure the effectiveness of the engagement strategy, evaluation should be considered at both the beginning and end of a project and progress should be monitored throughout. The nature of the evaluation will vary depending on the complexity and size of your engagement process. This is a key step and should not be excluded.

Key questions suggested by DHSS:

- What has worked well? What has been learnt?
- To what extent did the engagement process meet the engagement objectives?
- To what extent did the engagement process contribute to the overall project objectives?
- To what extent was the engagement process responsive to diverse community stakeholders?
- Were there any unexpected challenges?
- What could be done differently?
- Has it delivered the outcomes sought for participants? Are participants satisfied?

Regarding impact, evaluation, measurement and reporting, there are many models that could be used. One approach that is gaining increasing usage, both in the community and government sectors, is the **Results-Based Accountability (RBA) model (or Outcomes-Based Accountability)** with its simple focus on three key questions; namely –

- **How much did we do?** - demonstrates activity data outputs.
- **How well did we do it?** - demonstrates the relevance and quality of activities and whether they are 'hitting the mark' regarding outcomes.
- **Is anyone better off?** - demonstrates that communities and consumers have improved input and contribution.

RBA enables the use of both quantitative and qualitative instruments. RBA assists in the gathering of evidence and enables communication of impact. RBA has some critical advantages; namely:

- Moves from talk to action quickly;
- Is a simple, common sense process that everyone can understand;
- Helps groups to surface and challenge assumptions that can be barriers to innovation;
- Builds collaboration and consensus; and

- Uses data and transparency to ensure accountability for both the well-being of people and the performance of programs.

See www.raguide.org and Mark Friedman's publication – *'Trying Hard is not Good Enough'*. for more information on Results Based Accountability.

Barriers to Effective Stakeholder Engagement

DHSS in their community engagement initiatives have identified several common barriers to effective stakeholder engagement; namely –

- Unclear purpose;
- Insufficient skills or resources;
- Non-inclusive engagement approaches including a lack of facilitation skills in cultural awareness and inclusive engagement;
- Engagement fatigue;
- Failure to provide feedback on how stakeholder input has been used;
- Failure to evaluate.

5. Community Engagement Tools

As mentioned above, choosing the right tool or combination of tools for engaging your community is a critical step in the engagement planning process. Below are 27 tools, summarised under the five IAP2 levels, though certain tools when used in combination may be used at a variety of levels. Also note, that each tool summary indicates whether its value is primarily '*diverging*' (i.e. predominantly focussed on generating ideas and information) or '*converging*' (i.e. brings information together and enables decisions to be made or a solution/recommendation to be identified) or enables both.

i. Engagement Tools for INFORM level

a. PRINTED INFORMATION

Involves the provision of fact sheets, brochures, newsletters, media advertising, letters, position papers, media releases etc. Such information needs to inform, excite, encourage interest and solicit response. Can be directly mailed or conducted electronically through e-newsletters, emails or via SMS. This is a '*diverging*' tool.

Strengths:

- Provides profile to the organisation/exercise/initiative (especially during times of low activity).
- Straightforward exercise.
- Can inform large numbers of people.
- Allows people to absorb information at their convenience.
- Can be targeted to specific subgroups.
- Can help reduce misinformation.
- Can be used with a variety of other techniques.
- A newsletter can give regular updates and create a sense of positive movement/change.
- A mailing list can be built up.

Limitations:

- Provides no interaction or immediate reaction.
- Allows potential misinterpretation.
- No guarantee materials will be read.
- Does not enable direct feedback.
- Can be costly.
- Only suitable for small amounts of relatively basic information.
- May be viewed as a '*PR/selling*' job.

Operational Tips:

- Keep it short and simple.
- Give attention to quality, layout and appeal - must excite!
- Proof-read all documents.
- Seek feedback from random selected people before public release.
- Provide response details and encourage and assist feedback and two-way communication e.g. reply-paid forms/envelopes.
- Give attention to inclusive language - avoid jargon.
- Provide information in variety of appropriate languages.
- Utilise visuals.
- Avoid glossy/slick publications.
- Use in combination with other engagement activities.

b. DISPLAYS

A community event intended to provide project information and raise awareness about particular issues. Displays can be interactive, and can be used as part of a forum, workshop, exhibition, conference or other event. Sites involving a static display may be located at shopping centres, council offices, libraries, community/neighbourhood centres, schools, childcare centres etc. This is a '*diverging*' tool.

Strengths:

- Focuses public attention on an issue.
- Relative low cost.
- Enables visual displays.
- Can reach large number of people.
- Can reach people who may not participate in public forums/meetings.

Limitations:

- Public must be motivated to attend.
- Focuses on information dissemination rather than information exchange.
- Distribution site may be overcrowded with information, and materials get lost.
- May be expensive to prepare display.
- Reactions and issues cannot be immediately explored.
- Can damage the sponsor's reputation if not done well.

Operational Tips:

- Choose a high pedestrian traffic area e.g. shopping centres, window display of a prominent building, local library.
- May be more successful if combined with open days and/or permanent shop front.

- Advertise and publicise the event with emphasis on the issue to be considered. Advertise times when display/exhibit will be open.
- Provide adequate staffing and consider the employment of volunteers.
- Consider duty of care and insurance issues.
- Give attention to quality and best practice merchandising principles.
- Use visuals, photographs, maps, humour etc.
- Consider electronic displays e.g. touch screens, TV/ video presentations etc.
- If setting up a permanent display, update regularly and remove materials when past their use by date.
- Provide contact details and response options.
- Provide take away information.
- Preferably staff the display with person(s) whose role(s) are specifically public interaction.
- Provide reference to other community engagement options.
- Regularly manage upkeep of information.
- Develop a distribution list.
- Collate feedback and publish result.

c. WEBSITE

Involves the provision of information via electronic means directly into a household. It is now a popular way to provide information to the public. They are increasingly being used to target the online community. This is both a *'diverging'* and *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Capable of reaching a large audience with enormous amount of information at low cost.
- Ideal community noticeboards.
- Readily updateable and able to dispatch information with relative ease.
- Popular information source, especially for younger generations.
- Enables visual displays.
- Can contain a great deal of information that can be updated.
- Can use a variety of languages.
- Increasing number of web-based platforms that allow two-way engagement, including use of webinars.

Limitations:

- Disadvantages people with no or limited access and/or digital literacy.
- Technical difficulties.
- Potential of information overload.

Operational Tips:

- Good website design is essential.
- Ensure ease of navigation.

- Keep information updated.
- Ensure younger community members are involved in production and servicing.
- Have alternative communication options for those who are not web-literate or do not have access to the internet.

d. MEDIA INITIATIVES

Involves the use of media through either paid advertising or use of editorial and interviews. Advertising can be used for information dissemination and/or solicitation of feedback through a clip out coupon. Securing free media is either via news release distribution or securing interview opportunities (print, radio or television). This is a *'diverging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Can reach a broad and significant audience.
- Low or no cost.
- Media coverage always provokes interest.
- Can be used to motivate participation in other community engagement exercises.
- Can alert media organisations to an issue/event and may encourage their active participation through civic journalism.

Limitations:

- Potential for misinformation.
- No interaction.

Operational Tips:

- Must be newsworthy.
- See **Section 8** below – *'Tips for Working Effectively with the Media'*.

e. SOCIAL MEDIA INITIATIVES

Social media refers to digital channels that allow the creation, sharing and exchange of user-generated information, ideas, and pictures/videos with online communities or social networks. Applications may include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube, LinkedIn and Research Gate. This is both a *'diverging'* and *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Can reach a broad and significant audience.
- Cost effective.
- Allows immediate and real time interaction on issues as they happen.
- Clear data measurement and analytics can be built in.

- Can be used to motivate participation in other community engagement exercises.

Limitations:

- Potential for misinformation.
- May exclude some groups with no or limited internet access and/or digital literacy.

Operational Tips:

- Ensure resources to respond to responses.
- Tailor the social media strategy to suit the platform used.

ii. Engagement Tools for CONSULT level

a. BRIEFINGS/COMMUNITY GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Involves the provision of presentations to, and interaction with key stakeholder groups. Addresses to community groups may be a very useful technique to disseminate information and solicit feedback on a particular project/initiative/issue. Service clubs, churches, men's sheds etc. are always interested in presentations on relevant topics. This is primarily a *'diverging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Groups with an identifiable interest and relevance can be targeted and reached.
- Relatively easy to organise.
- Cost effective.
- Potential to establish new working relationships and allies.
- Enables opportunity for feedback, dialogue and interaction.
- Enables control of information, and opportunities to correct misinformation.
- Possibility of reaching a diverse range of people.
- Gives opportunity to reflect, evaluate and adjust messages.
- Useful public relations activity – builds community goodwill.
- Allows presentations to be tailored with specific information suited to different groups.

Limitations:

- May exclude certain groups.
- Requires a presenter with effective public speaking/engagement abilities.
- Time consuming.
- Inaccurate information may get passed on by audience members.
- Information may be used inappropriately.
- Can raise expectations.
- Does not provide a forum for making decisions.

Operational Tips:

- Keep it short and simple.
- Use clear, jargon free inclusive language.
- Use visuals that illustrate the verbal and written content.
- Accompany with printed information.
- Use effective public speakers and credible resource persons.
- Target groups with relevance to project/issue/initiative.
- Approach groups - do not wait to be asked.
- Fit in with the group's regular meeting times.
- Tailor presentation to group and its background- spend time researching that background.
- Encourage participants to pass on the information to others in the community.
- Leave printed information.
- Concerns and ideas need to be recorded.
- Always outline opportunities for ongoing participation.

b. SURVEYS/QUESTIONNAIRES/RESPONSE SHEETS

Surveying is a data collection tool, whereby participants are asked to self-report their experiences or opinions via a questionnaire. A survey questionnaire can be mailed-out, compiled through face to face interviews, completed over the telephone, or increasingly, completed on the internet. This can be in the form of an open online community, with an open conversation through a web page. Surveying may involve blanket, random or selected distribution. Questionnaires ensure that exactly the same questions are presented to each person surveyed, and this helps with the reliability of the results. This is primarily a 'diverging' tool.

Strengths:

- Can gather opinions of a large number of people, thus ensuring a representative community view.
- Can gather information from people other than those who attend meetings.
- Less personal than interviewing, their anonymity can encourage more honest answers.
- Can gather specific information.
- If done regularly, surveys can monitor trends in public views over time.
- Can generate a data base.
- Works well to reach respondents who live in remotely.
- Can be used for statistical validation.
- Allows results to be extrapolated by subgroups.
- Allows the respondent to fill out at their convenience.
- Internet-based surveys are convenient and cost-effective.
- Useful to supplement other methods e.g. focus groups, personal contact etc.

Limitations:

- Can be expensive exercise.

- Generally, only useful for qualitative data.
- Low response rates can bias the results.
- Require expertise in their design and the analysis. Poor design may result in biases and erroneous results.
- Customer response to surveys (i.e. the proportion of surveys completed and returned) is typically extremely low – a good response is unlikely to exceed 20% or 30% of the surveys administered. A Low response often occurs when using a mail out/drop off return system.
- Surveys may exclude certain groups and are thus unlikely to generate completely representative samples – does depend on a high degree of literacy.
- Communities are often over surveyed.
- Questions may be misinterpreted.
- May not allow two-way communication (exception is the structured interview conversation questionnaire described below).
- Collation and interpretation can be time consuming.

Operational Tips:

- Have a clear purpose and decide on the end use of results before construction.
- Trial questions with a small sample (pilot group) to determine whether questions are unbiased, straightforward, unambiguous and not open to misinterpretation.
- Be diligent about survey methodology and question construction (perhaps seek professional assistance in designing survey) - effective question construction is a skill.
- Include description of purpose in a preface or covering note.
- Vary question types - include open ended questions.
- Collection and method of analysis be determined before distribution.
- Ensure questions are in a logical sequence.
- Avoid using jargon and technical language.
- Keep survey as brief and as simple as possible.
- Try to ensure survey is administered to all interested stakeholders.
- Telephone surveys, while typically more expensive than other surveys, usually provide better response rates and offer the chance to clarify questions for respondents.
- Boost response rates by providing incentives or issuing reminders to complete them.
- Include a return envelope/freepost address to encourage participation.
- Develop a software package to capture results.
- Avoid collecting data already available elsewhere e.g. census data.
- Statistically tested results have more credibility.
- Ensure results are fed back to community.
- Consider the feasibility of using other languages than just English.

c. BIG IDEA POST CARDS

Involves the design and printing of post card size cards which call for the submission of good ideas or responses to a particular issue or question. Ideal for distribution through community '*bumping spaces*'

like local coffee shops or as an additional response outlet at other engagement activities. This is primarily a *'diverging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Easy way to generate many ideas or responses.
- Taps into individual creativity and ideas.
- Low cost.
- Adds to organisational profile.
- Provides direct information gathering.
- Builds a data base.

Limitations:

- Does not allow for a two-way exchange of information.
- No opportunity for community consensus on particular responses or ideas.

Operational Tips:

- Accompany with a promotional campaign.
- Link with prizes for a broader response.
- Provide collection bins at key *'bumping spaces'*.
- Always include an opportunity to express how respondent(s) can help make the idea a reality.
- Report back to community via media regarding ideas or responses.

d. INFORMATION SESSIONS/DAYS/OPEN HOUSES/OPEN DAYS

Involves the provision at a central location of displays, printed information and most important, project team members to answer questions or discuss issues within a comfortable environment. Represents a relatively informal event that enables the public to drop in at their convenience and obtain information and have a chat. This is primarily a *'diverging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Allows the public to participate at their convenience and fit in to personal timetables.
- Enables participants to engage at their own pace – participants can stay as long or short a time as they wish.
- Provides an opportunity for informal discussion at participant convenience – fosters communication.
- Provides opportunity to correct misinformation.

- Allows opportunity for in-depth small group and one-on-one discussion.
- Allows direct contact with interested stakeholders.
- Can break down barriers and builds organisational credibility.
- Often used as a lead-in activity to other engagement events - achieves early publicity for that activity.
- Where a local issue is contentious, it provides a relaxed forum where conflict is less likely to occur.
- Meets the information and interaction needs of many members of the public who are not attracted to typical and large public meetings.

Limitations:

- Still primarily information giving, rather than receiving.
- Expensive to create attractive displays.
- Success relies on project staff knowledge and personal interaction/communication skills.
- May only attract a limited cross section of the community.
- Participation is always difficult to predict.
- Protesters may use the opportunity to disrupt the event.
- Usually more staff intensive than a meeting.
- May not provide the opportunity to be heard that some community members were expecting.

Operational Tips:

- Location(s) is the critical factor- needs to be central and accessible.
- Hold at times and locations convenient to community members- be flexible with opening times.
- Requires extensive and creative advertising.
- Be there when you say you are going to be there.
- Organisers need to maintain a low-key presence but ensure everyone is acknowledged (verbally or non-verbally) as soon as they enter the space.
- Requires project team members with excellent knowledge and strong communication skills.
- Must be held at convenient times and locations for community.
- Issues raised need recording and a response.
- Provide take away material.
- Combine with a feedback form or opportunities for community members to record/vote regarding their priorities/choices.
- Provide refreshments.
- Collect contact details to forward future information.
- Consider rotating the venue location.

e. TELEPHONE ACCESS/INFORMATION HOTLINES

Comprises the use of the telephone to provide and/or solicit information on a particular issue/initiative/concern. Service is personally manned or through the use of an answering service. May involve provision of an 1800 number. This is primarily a '*diverging*' tool.

Strengths:

- Easy access for community members.
- Offers an inexpensive and simple device for publicity, information and public input.
- Provides a good service to the public by preventing people '*doing the run around*' to access project information.
- Portrays an image of '*accessibility*' for an organisation.
- Can be an avenue for citizens to feel more involved in their community.

Limitations:

- Affords limited interaction.
- Language limitations.
- Level of success depends on recording and good follow-up and feedback procedures.
- Does not generally allow complex issues to be addressed and discussed.
- If staffed by volunteers, can be time consuming.

Operational Tips:

- Focus on maximising user-friendly nature.
- If personally manned, use project team with good knowledge and strong customer service skills.
- Provide translation options.
- Ensure good recording, follow up and feedback procedures.
- Must be adequately advertised to be successful.
- Works best with an easy-to-remember phone number.
- Ensure all information is recorded and analysed.
- Ensure designated contact must have sufficient knowledge of the project to be able to answer questions quickly and accurately.

iii. Engagement Tools for INVOLVE level

a. PERSONAL CONTACT/ONE TO ONE CONVERSATIONS

Involves a conversation with individuals who have a stake or interest in the issue/project. Conversations can occur in people's homes, work places, project office or community meeting locations e.g. local coffee shop. An example of use is a door knock visitation initiative to businesses within a street regarding future street improvements. This is primarily a '*diverging*' tool.

Strengths:

- People feel valued and listened to – builds good community relations.
- Generates a great deal of qualitative and in-depth information and data through people sharing their opinions, experiences and feelings.
- Allows for a two-way exchange of information.
- Provides direct information gathering on public concerns and issues.
- Creates opportunity for honest conversation that can build relationship and trust.

Limitations:

- Time consuming to conduct and analyse- time and cost restraints can limit the number of participants.
- Some key individuals may be left out – difficult to involve all interested people.
- Opinions may not be representative.
- No opportunity for community consensus on particular issues or options.
- Some people feel uncomfortable with individual contact.
- Participants can take their frustrations out on the interviewer.
- One to one contact may be culturally inappropriate for some ethnic groups.
- Some people are tired of being interviewed.

Operational Tips:

- Give attention to design, as poor questions can fail to generate useful information.
- The design of interviews must consider the selection of who is interviewed, and the phrasing of questions to ensure they are not leading or misleading.
- Pre-test questions before beginning.
- Seek diversity of participation – avoid sample bias.
- Make it easy to be engaged – it is preferable to go to a person's chosen venue.
- Interviewing is a skill that needs cultivating and developing.
- Attempt to identify and involve all key stakeholders.
- Utilise appropriate meeting spaces.
- Care and sensitivity must always be exercised by interviewers.
- Allow people time to organise to participate and think about the relevant issues.
- Be organised - prepare appropriate introductions, questions and farewells.
- Maybe link with a questionnaire that can be left and picked up/returned later.
- At conclusion, always thank people for their participation, indicate what will happen with the information and other opportunities to contribute ideas and opinions.

b. STRUCTURED INTERVIEW CONVERSATIONS

Involves the preparation of a questionnaire which is used as a means of creating a dialogue with the interviewees, thus eliciting detailed information and enabling elaboration on responses. This technique has been made popular in Australia through the Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) Program. See Bank of I.D.E.A.S. [Business Expansion and Retention Manual](#). This is primarily a 'diverging' tool.

Strengths:

- Provides in-depth and quality responses.
- Useful for targeting key stakeholders who have specific knowledge about an issue.
- Provides opportunity to get understanding of concerns and issues of key stakeholders.
- Allows for a genuine conversation.

Limitations:

- Extremely time consuming e.g. within the *BEAR Program* each interview usually requires one and a half hours.
- Can be expensive.
- Interviewers must engender trust or risk negative response to the format.
- Requires skilled interviewers.

Operational Tips:

- Requires prerequisite interviewer training.
- Ideally, use two interviewers – one managing the conversation, the other recording interviewee opinions and choices.
- Give attention is needed in question construction and question order.
- Limit questionnaire to less than 25 question items.
- Always pre-test.
- Arrange times and venue at the convenience of the interviewee.
- Ensure uninterrupted interview time for at least one hour.
- Important that all interviewees receive feedback about results and outcomes of exercise.

c. FOCUS GROUPS

Represents a structured group conversation-based interview situation. Focus groups are used to gather information focussed on a particular topic/issue. A facilitator conducts a 'group interview' gaining a comprehensive range of views from a small group of people (5-12 persons). A focus group may be

conducted to gain opinions and views and/or generate ideas. Focus group discussions typically start broad and progressively focus the discussion on to a single question or point. This is a *'diverging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Provides an in-depth focus on a specific issue.
- Flexibility.
- Relatively inexpensive.
- Can provide fairly dependable data within a short time frame.
- Can verify prior assumptions.
- Brings out subtle variations in community member views.
- Particularly good for identifying the reasons behind people's likes/dislikes.
- Group environment may generate different dynamics and other issues and topics to a one to one interview situation. Focus groups can offer deeper insights into complex issues than interviews might, because individuals are exposed to a variety of views rather than just recounting their own.
- Provides opportunity to observe participant interaction.
- Less time consuming than individual conversations/interviews.
- Excellent for generating lateral thinking and *'group leapfrogging'*.

Limitations:

- Limited participation- the benefit of focus groups is depth, not breadth, of opinion and viewpoints. They may not be representative of a broader segment of the community.
- Potential for participant(s) to dominate and/or for the conversation to be hijacked by vocal and dominant participants.
- Personal power and group dynamics may influence opinions expressed.
- Requires a skilled facilitator.
- Participants may not represent majority community feeling or variety of opinions in a community.
- May be confronting for some to be open about their opinions depending on how well participants know one another.

Operational Principles

- Always use an experienced and skilled facilitator.
- Run several focus groups rather than just one. Ideally, the saturation principle should be followed, with groups run until the investigator is hearing no new information.
- Always use open ended questions.
- Take care in selecting who is invited to participate in a focus group – the same issues about sample bias that afflict surveys and interviews, can also limit insights from focus groups.
- Important to provide feedback to participants.
- Always combine with other methodologies.
- Never exceed 12 participants – best number is 5-6 persons.
- Engage a co-facilitator to record issues and ideas.

d. PUBLIC MEETINGS/FORUMS

Public meetings are open gatherings held to engage a wide audience in information sharing and dialogue. Public meetings increase awareness of an issue or proposal, and can be a starting point for, or an ongoing means of engaging, further public engagement. The format usually involves presentations followed by discussion and questions. This is a *'diverging'* and *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Allows the involvement and input of a wide range of people.
- Opportunity to present information to a large number of community members; to disseminate detailed information and decisions throughout the community.
- Relatively low cost.
- Allows two-way communication and immediate feedback.
- Non-confrontational to most participants.
- A traditional and familiar method of engagement.
- Can develop consensus for action on complex issues that affect the broad community.
- Provides opportunities for exploring alternative strategies and building consensus.
- Provides a good focal point for media interest.
- Often provide the springboard for the establishment of a common-interest action group which will continue to act on the issues raised and suggestions made.
- Often contribute to building a sense of community.
- attendance levels provide an indicator of the level of interest within a community on a particular issue.

Limitations:

- Large audiences limit the quality of interaction, conversation and idea/opinion exchange.
- Onus is on community members to attend.
- Can be time and resource intensive.
- Unless well facilitated, event can be heavily influenced or distracted by a small number of vocal attendees who do not necessarily represent views of wider public.
- Community members may not be willing to work together.
- May not achieve consensus.
- Does not ensure all views are heard - participants may not come from a broad enough range to represent the entire community.
- Difficult to utilise for complex and contentious issues.
- Can create opportunity for degeneration into emotional slanging matches.
- Success of meeting may be judged purely by the size of the turnout.
- Can raise expectations.

Operational Tips:

- Large turnout requires creative and extensive promotion and personal invitation.
- Select the best time to attract the largest number of participants.

- Provide refreshments – *'food and drink are what water is to fish'*.
- Always use strong chairperson/facilitator to keep discussion on track.
- Record issues/suggestions publicly.
- Be aware of and prepared for potential conflicts.
- Agree on the ground rules of meeting conduct prior to commencement. (see Section 7 below - *Community Conversation Ground-Rules / Etiquette*)
- Make clear that two-way communication is the goal.
- Ensure a focus on issues not personalities.
- Provide opportunities for small group table conversations and informal discussions e.g. refreshment breaks.
- Cater for people with disabilities or from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Be prepared to change tack during the meeting.
- As chair/facilitator – *'never Lose your temper or positive disposition!!'*

More information: see Bank of I.D.E.A.S. handout ['Conducting Effective Community Meetings'](#)

e. WORKSHOPS

Designed to generate a *'group'* product e.g. lists of issues, range of options or a mutually accepted plan of action. It is a useful method to bring together stakeholders with different values. A workshop is best used when there is a specific focus/issue and a need to generate solutions. Workshops can deliver a report, opinions, suggestions or plans that have been collaboratively developed and agreed to by all participants, on an issue or proposal. This is a *'diverging'* and *'converging'* tool.

There are a variety of participatory group techniques that can be used in the workshop process; including:

- **Brainstorming** - A method for developing creative options to a specific problem, issue or scenario. Participants come up with as many deliberately unusual solutions as possible and by pushing the ideas as far as possible. During the brainstorming session there is no criticism of ideas. Once this has been done the results of the brainstorming session can be analysed and the best solutions can be explored. Brainstorming is particularly useful for generating lots of ideas in a short period; encouraging lateral and creative thinking; expanding, *'piggy backing'* or *'leapfrogging'* on the ideas of others; helping participants to temporarily suspend judgement or criticism; and helping shy individuals to participate more effectively.
- **Fishbowl:** represents an inner group of participants in a roundtable format involved in a decision-making process that is *'witnessed'* by a larger group who have the opportunity for input and questioning

- **Mind Mapping:** developed by Tony Buzan, it is an effective method of notetaking and useful for the generation of ideas by associations. Mind maps help organise information. To make a mind map, one starts in the centre of the page with the main idea, and works outward in all directions, producing a growing and organised structure composed of key words and key images.
- **Nominal group technique:** a group process involving problem identification, solution generation, and decision making. It can be used in groups who want to make their decision quickly but want everyone's opinions taken into account (as opposed to traditional voting, where only the largest group is considered). The method of tallying is the difference. Firstly, every member of the group gives their view of the solution, with a short explanation. Then, duplicate solutions are eliminated from the list of all solutions, and the members proceed to rank the solutions, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on.
- **Force Field analysis:** a technique devised by Kurt Lewin that looks at the factors (*forces*) that influence a situation. It looks at forces that are either driving movement toward a goal (helping forces) or blocking movement toward a goal (hindering forces). The tool is useful for making decisions by analysing the forces for and against a change, and for communicating the reasoning behind one's decision.
- **Values clarification exercise:** Values answer the question of why people do what they do and guide our actions towards the things we believe are good in some way or another. Value clarification exercises/games help to explore these values, beliefs, motivations and choices within the group context. Very helpful in prioritising e.g. dot democracy activity.
- **Visioning:** use of gaming and imagination techniques to develop preferred future scenarios, followed by the steps to make them happen.
- **Backcasting:** a method of analysing alternative futures and how desirable futures can be attained. It involves working backward from a desired future endpoint or set of goals to the present to determine the physical feasibility of a particular future and the measures required to reach that end point. End-points are usually chosen for a future of 25 to 50 years.

Strengths:

- Maximum interchange of information and ideas.
- Enables prioritisation of possible actions.
- Enables the creation of a '*group*' product.
- Opportunity to hear the '*silent voices*'.
- Can strengthen ongoing relationships in the community.
- Builds ownership and credibility for the outcomes.
- Maximises feedback obtained from participants.
- Special issue groups get to listen to other voices and opinions.

Limitations:

- Requires skilled facilitation.
- Can be time consuming.
- Limited number for effectiveness (12-25 people is an ideal range).
- Can generate unrealistic expectations.
- Special interest groups may monopolise Workshop.

Operational Tips:

- Utilise a skilled and motivating facilitator.
- Create as much space/time for inclusion of small group conversations (six persons or less), and their feedback to the wider group.
- Hold additional workshops to meet demand rather than restrict participation.
- Avoid formality.
- Create a comfortable environment – pleasant setting, comfortable seating, provision of refreshments etc.
- Hold at convenient time for participants.
- Always use meeting ground rules/conversation etiquette - see Section 7 below - *Community Conversation Ground-Rules / Etiquette*.
- Always feedback outcomes of the workshop.

f. COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING

Represents a systematic process for identifying, connecting and mobilising capacities, resources and strengths (individual and organisational) in a community. The critical asset that is discovered is what people care about and willing to act upon, and who else cares about it. This is a *'diverging'* and *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Represents a strong community building initiative.
- An intentional appreciative approach that focuses on positivity and possibility.
- Discovers and connects community assets.
- Mobilises members to address critical community issues around what they care about.
- Builds bridges between community members and between community groups.

Limitations:

- Time consuming.
- Requires a person skilled in asset mapping techniques.

Operational Tips:

- Utilise an asset mapping focused facilitator.
- use a variety of audit forms. See [Bank of I.D.E.A.S. website](#).

g. PHOTOVOICE

Photovoice aims to add a visual element to engagement processes. Photovoice is a process where community members record information and express ideas, priorities, issues and concerns through photography. Participants engage in photographing their choices, suggestions and/or decisions which are then mounted as a photographic exhibition (with a one-line statement) to stimulate wider community conversation. This is both a *'diverging'* and *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Provides pictorial evidence of community issues – *'a picture being worth a thousand words'*.
- Provides an alternative means of expression which may help include those who are more visual than literate.
- Great initiative to tap into thoughts and ideas of young people.
- Provides a snapshot of an area or issue from which to develop indicators and to gauge changes/responses.
- Can easily be used in the media (print/television/interactive technologies).
- With the widespread use of mobile phones and digital camera, very easy for people to engage.

Limitations:

- Time and resource intensive - can be costly to mount exhibition.

Operational Tips:

- Requires staffing and the coordination of participants.
- Organise space and time for reflection and conversation.
- Hold briefing session/training for interested participants prior to exercise.

h. STUDY CIRCLE

Study circles provide a venue for in-depth, regular, lengthy discussions that allow exchange and deliberation of information on a particular topic or issue. It comprises 10-15 people who meet regularly over a period of weeks or months to address a critical public issue in a democratic and collaborative way. A study circle is facilitated by a person/ facilitator who is there not as an expert, but to serve the

group by keeping the discussion focused, helping the group consider a variety of views, and process difficult questions. This is both a *'diverging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Allows participants to gain ownership of the issues.
- Allows participants to discover a connection between personal experiences and public policies, and gain a deeper understanding of their own and others' perspectives and concerns.
- Since the dialogue does not promote one particular point of view or try to persuade people to take a specific action, potential coalition partners can usually find ways to work through ownership issues, mistrust or genuine disagreement.
- Fosters new connections among community members that lead to new levels of community action.

Limitations:

- Building a coalition that represents many points of view takes time and effort.

Operational Tips:

- Requires good facilitation skills and knowledge of the study circle philosophy and processes.

iv. Engagement Tools for COLLABORATE level

a. COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUPS/DELIBERATIVE FORUMS/CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES/CITIZEN PANELS

Involves the formation of a local reference group comprising selected community members due to their expertise or interest in a topic. Groups are usually formed with a specific purpose and mandate to provide broad based input and advice, and usually over the long term (in contrast to focus groups). Ideally groups should be less than 12 people. This is a *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Involvement is open to a wide range of people.
- A cost-effective way to test ideas and options.

- Allows two-way exchange.
- Builds community commitment and ownership.
- Effectively disseminates detailed information and decisions to members of the organisations or community sectors represented on the group.
- Provides opportunities for exploring alternative strategies and building on commonalities and alliances.
- Provides for a detailed analysis of project issues, timelines and deliverables and a focus on the outcomes.
- Participants gain an understanding of other perspectives leading toward an agreed, integrated outcome – often - allows for development of consensus.
- Enhances profile of sponsor.
- Builds community capacity.
- Highly visible form of participation.

Limitations:

- Usually restricted to advisory role, lacking any decision-making ability. This can frustrate participants. Frustration often occurs if advice not acted upon.
- Resource intensive.
- May not be representative of all interests.
- Information may not be passed on to broader community.
- Success depends on goodwill of all participants.
- Success depends on effective leadership.
- Potential of participant '*burn out*'. Sustaining the interest and availability of members over the long term may be difficult.
- Members' comments to the media may not coincide with the sponsor's policy.

Operational Tips:

- Give attention to membership selection – must have credibility, and be representative of various interests, points of view and background experiences. Diversity of views and backgrounds is essential.
- Set and record defined *Terms of Reference*.
- Participation should have a predetermined life-line.
- Utilise consensus decision making approach.
- Recognise and reward participation.
- Involve a skilled chairperson/facilitator – leadership is a vital issue.
- Tasks and actions need to be outlined and carried out.
- Be aware of potential conflicts between members.

b. DESIGN CHARRETTE

A charrette is an intensive planning session where community members, designers and others

collaborate on a vision for their community development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers. More importantly, it allows everyone who participates to be a mutual author of the eventual plans and actions. Usually occurs over a period from four days to two weeks long. This is a *'diverging'* and *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- Great opportunity to gain deep community insight of the future and design options - can open up horizons for community members to imagine and visualise possibilities.
- Holistic community analysis.
- Excellent option when people need to cut across boundaries and work on a large, collaborative project.
- Provides an opportunity for community members to have input at a number of points in the process.
- Can save money by being an effective use of time and resources
- Can create meaningful partnerships to ensure implementation.
- Builds trust between parties involved.
- The charrette process is an exercise of transparency, where information is shared between the design professionals and the stakeholders of a project area.
- Builds community capacity, local leadership and partnerships.
- Builds commitment to implement plans and actions- *'people support what they help to create'*.
- Can achieve unexpected outcomes, new energized community efforts and amazing community creativity - provides joint problem solving and creative thinking.
- Special interest lobbying can be diffused.

Limitations:

- Time intensive - the process usually lasts 4–14 days.
- Requires appropriate technical support - as specialists are required, the process is costly.
- The process can be *'railroaded'* by vocal stakeholders if not run by a trained design charrette facilitator.
- Participants may not be seen as representative of the wider community.

Operational Tips:

- Requires a dedicated team to administer.
- Provide clear guidelines and parameters.
- Provide input to stimulate creative thinking and ideas.
- Provide appropriate technical support and financial resources.
- Requires adequate time provided for reflection and refinement.

c. ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY

Electronic democracy seeks to embrace existing and emergent media sources as a forum for allowing members of the public to express opinions and seek to influence decision-making within their

community, state, country or globally. Participation using the internet through email, online voting and access to information on websites are widely used as participatory tools. Community members can use email or websites to register their opinions on proposed ideas or issues. Its desired outcome is to increase the number and diversity of people who exercise their democratic rights through choices and comments sent to decision-making bodies with regard to proposals and issues. This is a '*diverging*' tool.

Strengths:

- Creates a virtual public space where people can interact, discuss issues, share ideas and vote.
- Allows community members to participate at their own convenience.
- Allows citizens to participate at their own convenience.
- Can potentially reach a large audience.
- Facilitates interactive communication.
- Attractive to younger generations.
- Disseminates large amounts of information effectively and without distortion.
- Can generate a significant data base.

Limitations:

- May exclude participation by those not online or internet literate.
- Results can be manipulated; therefore results of polls should be carefully considered.

Operational Tips:

- Requires a dedicated team to administer (maybe a volunteer team).
- Community members can become disillusioned if the project is 'over-hyped'. Keep expectations realistic.
- Keep the site well organised and up to date.

d. PLANNING4REAL

Planning4real offers community residents a '*voice*' to bring about an improvement to their own neighbourhood or community. Community members begin by constructing a three-dimensional model of their neighbourhood/community; from which they construct their community vision by placing suggestion cards on the three-dimensional model, then sorting and prioritising the suggestions. The model is made so that it can be moved from venue to venue, allowing more people to participate.

The intended outcome of Planning4real is to deliver a design or plan that incorporates community ideas, needs and issues and that will therefore be more acceptable and useful to the community. Hopefully it also will give the community a sense of ownership of the plan that may also incorporate elements of ongoing community involvement and monitoring. This is a '*diverging*' tool.

Strengths:

- Highly visual, ‘hands-on’ and participatory activity.
- Delivers a three-dimensional model that may help people better envisage planned changes.
- Very effective in mobilising community support and interest.
- Generates ongoing community involvement – ‘people support what they help to create’.
- Specific projects are identified, and implementation is set in motion.
- Has appeal for those who are more visual/tactile in their approach.
- Can help bridge language barriers in multicultural communities.
- Great media story.
- Builds community capacity.

Limitations:

- Requires commitment from decision makers to follow through on suggestions – can lead to community frustration if suggestions not acted upon.
- Can be expensive to develop the three-dimensional model.
- Requires commitment from participants to stay for two and a half hours to participate in the whole process.
- Time consuming in terms of follow up and feedback.

Operational Tips:

- Requires a dedicated and skilled team to oversee.
- Ideal community project to engage local service clubs and Men’s Shed.

e. FUTURE SEARCH CONFERENCE

Usually two to three-day event where participants attempt to create a shared community vision of the future. It attempts to bring together those with the power to make decisions with those affected by the decisions to try to agree on a plan of action. Participants are encouraged to explore the past, present and future and make action plans based on common ground. This is a ‘diverging’ and ‘converging’ tool.

‘A future search conference is a large-group task-oriented ‘conversation’” (Fred Emery)

Strengths:

- Represents a strong community building initiative.
- Develops creative and achievable strategies.
- Useful in identifying issues at the early stages of a project or process.
- Assists in identifying key or priority issues.
- Generates support for ongoing involvement - combines formulation and implementation.
- Useful when participation of large groups is desirable, and an open forum is sought.

- Builds bridges between community members and between community groups - Generates consensus and shared values.
- Achieves completion of a task in two or three days (and sometimes evenings) that would take months if left to specialised analysts and experts.
- Equal status of participants is supported.
- Personal commitment and ownership are emphasised.

Limitations:

- Time and resource intensive – two/three day time frame may affect the availability of participants.
- Can be logistically challenging given the number of potential participants.
- Requires the engagement of an experienced facilitator.

Operational Tips:

- Hire skilled facilitator.
- Compile a report of proceedings.

f. NEGOTIATION and MEDIATION

Negotiation and mediation aims to deal with conflict in a creative and positive way, and to find a solution or a way for people to hear and appreciate the differences between their perspectives. They are designed to create shared understanding through effective and reflective questioning.

Negotiation is the process of searching for an agreement that satisfies various parties. Mediation is the attempt to help parties in disagreement to hear one another, to minimise the harm that can come from disagreement (e.g. hostility or '*demonising*' of the other parties) to maximise any area of agreement, and to find a way of preventing the areas in disagreement from interfering with the process of seeking a compromise or mutually agreed outcome. They are both a '*diverging*' and '*converging*' tools.

Strengths:

- Generally used when normal participation methods fail.
- Helps participants towards an understanding of other's viewpoint.
- '*Win/win*' outcomes.
- Promotes accountability on both sides.

Limitations:

- Time and resource intensive.
- Requires skilled mediator/negotiator.

- Requires commitment from both sides.
- Moderators can be costly, and their lack of knowledge of the content can be a drawback in the kinds of questions posed.
- Can be time consuming; could take months of meetings to find a mutually satisfactory outcome.
- Needs all parties to agree to objective criteria by which to assess the '*fairness*' of solutions.
- '*Win-win*' is not guaranteed.

Operational Tips:

- Use a skilled independent mediator/negotiator.
- Establish firm operational guidelines.
- Seek commitment to the process from both sides.
- Works best when the parties concerned are engaged; less well when a representative is asked to negotiate, as they may not feel they have the authority to be flexible in their solutions.

v. Engagement Tools for EMPOWER level

a. CITIZEN JURIES

Involves selected members of the wider community being engaged in the democratic decision-making process. Participants are engaged as citizens with no formal alignments or allegiances, rather than experts. Citizen juries use a representative sample of 8-12 citizens (usually selected in a random or stratified manner) who are briefed in detail on the background and current thinking relating to a particular issue and asked to discuss possible approaches. They examine data and evidence by questioning decision-makers, technicians and interested parties – all of whom are witnesses to the process. Citizens are asked to become jurors and make a '*judgement*' in the form of a report, as they would in legal juries.

Citizen juries can be used to broker a conflict, or to provide a transparent and non-aligned viewpoint. Citizen jurors simply bring to the situation their own knowledge and personal experience. The Jury provides the opportunity to add to that knowledge and to exchange ideas with their fellow citizens. The result is a collective one, in which each juror has a valuable contribution to make. This is a '*diverging*' and '*converging*' tool.

Strengths:

- Strives to improve representation in participative processes by engaging a cross section of the community on the jury.
- Can be used to moderate divergence and provide a transparent, independent and credible process

for decision making.

- Provides a transparent participatory process which can be seen to be independent and credible.
- Provides a public democracy mechanism – a highly visible form of participation.
- Provides citizens with an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the issue.
- Involves ordinary citizens.
- Pinpoints fatal flaws or gauges public reaction and opinion.
- Great opportunity to develop deep understanding of an issue.
- Can dispel misinformation.
- Can provide unexpected outcomes.

Limitations:

- The wider community is distanced from the final decision-making process.
- Can be expensive.
- Group selection can be mistrusted by the wider community.
- Sessions can lose focus.

Operational Tips:

- The wider community is distanced from the decision-making process.
- Requires strong organisational support and commitment.
- Timeframe often requires six months- while the event usually lasts four days, ahead of the event, time needs to be allowed to engage jury, hire facilitator, put together briefing or background papers and contact 'experts'.
- Needs a skilled independent moderator/facilitator.
- Be clear about how the results will be used.
- Jury members need to be representative of the community in consideration.
- Everyone involved and the general public needs to be clear about the results and how they will be used.
- Provide expert witnesses to brief the jury who can be cross-examined and who can spend time discussing the issue with the Jury.
- The commissioning body must follow recommendations or explain why.

b. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING (PB)

PB is another form of deliberative democracy. It is a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making, in which ordinary people decide how to allocate part of a public budget. Participatory budgeting allows community members to identify, discuss, and prioritise public spending projects, and gives them the power to make real decisions about how money is spent. PB processes are typically designed to involve those left out of traditional methods of public engagement. This is a '*diverging*' and '*converging*' tool.

The often-quoted best example of PB is the city government of Porto Alegre in Brazil. It convenes neighbourhood, regional and city-wide assemblies, with over 50,000 citizens participating, in which participants identify spending priorities. Since the practice was established, a range of improvements in governance, wellbeing and citizen engagement have been achieved, with an increase from 75 to 99 per cent of homes having running water and the number of public schools almost tripling.

Strengths:

- Strives to improve representation in participative processes by engaging a cross section of the community.
- Provides a transparent participatory process which can be seen to be independent and credible.
- Provides a public democracy mechanism. It is a highly visible form of participation.
- Provides citizens with an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the funding decisions.
- Involves ordinary citizens.
- Great opportunity to develop deep understanding of funding arrangements.
- Can provide unexpected outcomes.

Limitations:

- Can be expensive.
- Group selection can be mistrusted by wider community.

Operational Tips:

- Requires strong organisational support, commitment and management.
- Needs a skilled independent moderator/facilitator.
- Participants need to be representative of the community.
- Everyone involved and the general public needs to be clear about the results and how they will be used.
- The commissioning body must follow recommendations or explain why.

c. DELIBERATIVE OPINION POLLING

A Deliberative Opinion Poll (DOP) is a form of opinion poll that incorporates the principles of deliberative democracy. The typical deliberative opinion poll takes a random, representative sample of community members and engages them in deliberation on current issues or proposed policy changes through small-group discussions and conversations with competing experts to create more informed and reflective public opinion.

Compared to ordinary opinion polls, DOPs differ in that participants are informed via briefing notes and access to experts on a particular issue and have time to consider the issue in detail, whereas participants in ordinary opinion polls do not have the opportunity to learn about the issue being measured and may know little about the issue. Key DOP essential elements are *'influence, inclusion and deliberation'* (Janette Hartz-Karp). This is a *'converging'* tool.

Strengths:

- The DOP uses a random sample of the population so that the results can be extrapolated to the community as a whole. The DOP advises decision makers and the media what the public would think if they had enough time to consider the issue properly
- Facilitates interactive communication.
- Participants are exposed to a variety of views and opinions.
- Special interest lobbying can be diffused.
- Builds community capacity.
- Can provide unexpected outcomes.

Limitations:

- Time consuming for participants and sponsor.
- Usually needs 250-600 participants, so set up costs can be high.
- With so many participants' opinions, managing data is a significant undertaking.
- Requires access to experts in a number of fields.
- Mistrust of sponsors and an unfamiliar process can hamper participation.
- Agenda can be too ambitious.
- Requires skilled management.

Operational Tips:

- Ensure a skilled facilitator/manager.
- Commit to the full process.
- Ensure adequate resources.
- Achieve a cross section of participants from across the community.
- Ensure that all key elements are included.
- Develop capacity in participants.
- Conduct baseline survey of opinion.

6. Community Conversation Methodologies

a. OPEN SPACE (OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY)

Open Space was created in the mid 1980's as a learning experience by Harrison Owens when he discovered that people attending conferences / workshops preferred coffee breaks and lunchtimes more than formal presentation and planning sessions! He discovered that in coffee break and lunchtime, participants chose who they wanted to be with, and shared topics that were of interest to them. The theory behind Open Space is that people will take ownership of issues they wish to address. Participants determine the agendas, the length of the event and the outcomes.

'Open Space is a brilliant combination of order and chaos. It is a useful tool for any group of people (five to one thousand participants) who are really committed to exploring something that they all care deeply about'. (Harrison Owen)

Process:

Open Space events or sessions have no keynote speaker, no pre-arranged schedule of workshops and no panel discussions. Instead, participants learn initially about a process to create their own learning experience. They go about creating and participating in discussion of their own forces. The key steps are simple –

1. Processes and key principles/law are explained by event facilitator.
2. Anyone wanting to initiate a discussion or activity summarises it in a few words or a sentence on a large sheet of paper and then stands up and has less than a minute to announce/promote his/her interest topic to the group. After selecting one of the pre-established times and places, they *'post'* their proposed discussions / workshop on a wall.
3. When everyone who wants to initiate / post a topic is done, it is time for what Owen refers to as the *'Village Marketplace'* – participants mill around the wall of options, putting together their personal schedules for the duration of the event.
4. The first discussion / workshops begin immediately with those who posted topics hosting the individual discussions. Hosts appoint people to record .
5. Each discussion group shares their two or three *'nuggets of gold'* with the wider audience and submits their summary to event facilitator to have circulated.

Open Space Principles and Law:

1. Whoever comes are the right people.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time.
4. When it's over, it's over.

5. 'The Law of Two Feet' – if you find yourself in a group where you are not learning, contributing or enjoying, go somewhere else.

For further information see:

- Owen, H (1997) *Expanding Our Now: the story of open space technology*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Owen H (1997) *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- www.openspaceworld.org

b. CAFÉ CONVERSATION

Conversation Cafe (internationally known as *The World Café*) is a fun, flexible and easy to use process for fostering dialogue, sharing knowledge and discussing new opportunities for action. Using the imagery of a café, *Conversation Cafe* is a methodology to create meaningful conversation around 'questions that matter'. Conversation Cafe is based on the assumption that meaning and energy for change are generated as a result of the quality of the communications in which we participate.

Key Steps:

1. Determine the theme(s) you want to explore.
2. Invite through a comprehensive range of methods (especially personal invitations) as many people relevant to the theme(s).
3. Create a warm, inviting and hospitable environment that resembles an inviting café space:
 - interesting décor
 - food and drink
 - background music
 - tables with butcher's paper as table covering.
4. Once participants arrive and gather around the tables (no more than six to a table), Event Host introduces the purpose of *Conversation Cafe* and the event process. Have the question(s) being discussed during the evening prominent on each table (e.g. on a card resembling a tent on each table) and projected onto the wall.
5. Tables engage in conversation around that question. Felt pens on each table allow participants to record and/or draw ideas on the paper table cloth.
6. After 20-30 minutes, the Event Host asks one person to remain at the table (e.g. 'youngest member', 'person with least hair' etc.), and other participants to leave and join another table and continue the discussion. The person remaining ensures all new table members introduce themselves and then takes one minute to summarise with the new table group the key ideas that emerged from the previous discussion. This allows the opportunity for new members to piggyback discussion on an idea already contributed or to continue brainstorm new ideas.
7. After 15-25 minutes, the process of reshuffling the tables occurs again.
8. After a further 15-20 minutes, a third reshuffle occurs.

9. The Event Host then engages in a whole group sharing experience where he/she calls for the best ideas people heard to be shared. With assistance, he/she captures the ideas.
10. Event may end with using a technique like '*Dot Democracy*' for group prioritization of ideas i.e. each person is given six coloured dots and asked to '*spend*' dots on the best ideas they heard – such a process immediately gives a visual record of the most popular ideas.
11. Event Host explains what will happen to the information generated, thanks everyone for their participation and invites people to continue enjoying the company of fellow community / organisation members and the hospitality of the event.

Key Process Principles:

1. Clarify in planning the context for holding the event –
 - topic/issue to be explored?
 - who needs to be there?
 - best timing?
 - best venue?
 - best duration?
2. Create a hospitable place – warm, inviting and non-threatening. Remember that food and drink is what water is to fish!
3. Craft the key question(s). It / they need to be –
 - simple and clear
 - thought provoking
 - energy creating
 - idea generating.
4. Encourage everyone's contribution.
5. Never allow table group size to exceed six.
6. Share and record collective discoveries and practices.

For further information see:

- Brown, J et al. (2010) *The World Café: Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

c. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a conversation methodology that seeks out the '*best of what*' to help ignite the collective imagination of '*what might be*'. It was initially developed by David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University as an interview process that focuses on strength and high-point experiences. Appreciative Inquiry is a particular way of asking questions and envisioning the future that fosters positive relationships and builds on the basic goodness in a person, a situation, a community or an organisation. AI asks people to tell their stories about their connections with others when they have been at their best.

The basic idea is to build the future around *'what works'*, rather than trying to fix what does not. AI is a reaction to problem based and deficiency focused change methodologies. It is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organisations and their community. It involves systematic discovery of what has happened in the past, and what gives a person, an organisation or community *'life'* when most effective and capable.

AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilises inquiry through crafting *'unconditional positive questions'* that lead to sharing best practices, magic moments and life-giving experiences. In AI, such sharing leads to imagination and innovation. AI assumes that people, organisations and their communities have untapped, rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. When this *'positive change core'* is directly linked to change agenda, AI believes that changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilised. AI generates hope, optimism, collaboration and energy – powerful forces for change.

Five Key Stages of Appreciative Inquiry:

- DEFINE:** *Determine what to focus on*
DISCOVERY: *Appreciate what you have got*
DREAM: *Imagine what can be*
DESIGN: *Create what will be*
DELIVER: *Work on making it happen.*

Typical Appreciative Inquiry Questions:

- *'What are the strengths and assets of our community?'*
- *'Share a time when you felt our community was at its best?'*
- *'What do you value most about our community?'*
- *'What is the essence of our community that makes it unique and strong?'*
- *What gives you most hope for the future of our community?*
- *What has happened in our community that gives our children a great start in life?*
- *'If you had three wishes for the future of our community, what would they be?'*

Appreciative Inquiry Assumptions:

- In every society, organisation or group, something works.
- What we focus on becomes our reality – communities grow from what they personally ask questions about.
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
- If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
- It is important to value differences.
- The language we use creates our reality.

Key Appreciative Inquiry Practice Principles:

- Always work in the affirmative.

- Ask provocative questions. Probe for excitement and possibility.
- Focus on the positive. Look for the budding flower amid the gray backdrop!
- Generate interactive dialogue. Provide space for dialogue and questions.
- Respect the past, live the present and look to the future.
- Seek the root cause of success, not the root cause of failure.

For further information see:

- Cooperrider, D et al. (2003) *Appreciative Inquiry: The Handbook*, Euclid: Crown Custom Publishing.
- Hammond S (1998) *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, Plano: Thin Book Publishing
- Hammond S and Royal C (2001) *Lessons from the Field: Applying Appreciative Inquiry*, Plano: Thin Book Publishing.

7. Who is a Facilitator?

A facilitator is many things:

- Someone who organises the work of a group.
- Someone who brings out the full potential of working groups.
- Someone who provides processes, tools and techniques that can get work accomplished quickly and effectively in a group environment.
- Someone who keeps a group meeting on track.
- Someone who helps resolve conflict.
- Someone who draws out participation from everyone.
- Someone who makes sure that the goals are met.
- Someone who provides structure to the work of a group.

What a facilitator is not:

Someone who manipulates the situation through:

- Changing the wording of a participant.
- Refusing to record an idea (looks tired, got distracted, too many ideas coming at once).
- Getting involved in the content of the group work.
- Getting emotionally attached to outcomes.
- Judging comments of the group, liking some ideas better than others.
- *'Flip flopping'* the agenda and work processes.
- Manipulating people and behaviours through their own feedback.
- Monopolising conversation.
- Taking sides on issues or people.
- Being closed to group suggestions on the process.
- Trying to have all the answers.

8. Community Conversation Ground-Rules / Etiquette

In any group conversation event, it is useful to include a copy of the event ground rules / etiquette within the program handout as people arrive, or on the back of name cards or to display as posters around the room. It is important for the facilitator to reiterate the rules at the start of any workshop activity and seek group agreement.

This is the set utilised by the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. –

1. Discard old disputes, feuds and ideologies at the door.
2. Be mindful about what really matters.
3. Actively engage your heart and mind – share your passions and what you really care about.
4. Listen with respect and curiosity.
5. Share airtime - keep ideas, opinions and comments short.
6. Focus on possibility and positive futures rather than debate the past.
7. Above all, have fun!

9. Tips for Effectively Working with the Media

The media (newspapers, TV, radio) is a very important means of informing the public about one's organisation and its community engagement initiatives. Media coverage represents a vital information, marketing and promotional opportunity which no organisation can afford to ignore. However, effective use of the media is a skill which needs to be developed.

General Principles:

- Decide who will deal with the media. Whether you use one person or a group to deal with publicity, it is essential that reporters know whom to contact for a clear, mandated comment or statement. Channel all communications with the media through one spokesperson and ensure all your members know who this is.
- Be careful not to raise local expectations beyond what you can deliver. This will quickly lose your credibility with the community and it will take a long time to get it back.
- Be proactive - seek the media out. Do not wait for the media to chase you. Make a list of local newspapers, radio and TV contacts, including local newsletters. Look out for specialist publications who may be interested in your initiatives.
- Establish relationships. Get to know local reporters, correspondents and editors. Find out about their deadlines and the issues they are interested in. But do not waste their time.
- Do not play favourites with the local media. Alternate timings the times when stories and press releases are distributed, to ensure no one media outlet is favoured.
- Be open and reliable - give accurate information. Stick to the facts. When giving an opinion, make sure you state it is your opinion. Provide honest answers to questions. If you are phoned by a reporter to comment on something, feel free to ask for 10 minutes to collect one's thoughts, but make sure you phone back.
- Invite media representatives to your meetings. Send them minutes (always with a prepared media statement summarising the key points you wish to convey), give them early notice of important events. Always provide an after-hour's phone number at the end of any press statement or after an interview and return calls promptly. Go out of your way to report progress.
- Be helpful - most media organisations are short of time and resources. The more you can help them without being asked the better. Put particular effort into writing media press releases (see below). Journalists are usually too busy to spend a lot of time rewriting press releases.

Make sure it is news:

The media look for news that is new, unusual and which in their opinion, will interest their readers, listeners or viewers. Do not bombard them with press releases every time you have an idea; you will soon develop a bad reputation. As a general rule, the more local the media outlet (local newspapers,

community radio) the greater their feeling of obligation and willingness be to report events and issues of interest or benefit to the local community.

Make sure your news is fresh and allow time for reporters to meet their deadlines. Arrange photographic or video opportunities or provide good quality photographs (most media prefer to take their own).

Stories in which your local media could be interested:

- new projects and initiatives
- openings and launches
- festivals
- visitors with special skills or experiences
- success stories
- awards and presentations
- surveys and statistics
- workshops and community meetings
- contests
- local and overseas study tours and visits
- exchange programmes
- research projects
- unusual local businesses - could be products, services or the people involved.

Ways of conveying news to the media:

- Media press releases
- Phone calls/alerts
- Invitations
- Media conferences
- Radio phone-in shows
- Circulation of documents
- *'Letters to the Editor'*.

Press Releases:

A press release (media release or press statement) is one of the most efficient ways of informing the media or making an announcement. It saves your organisation and media outlets' time, helps get the facts correct and enables your group to inform a range of media outlets at the same time. It is simply a statement that tells "the WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW, and WHY" concisely.

A press release must create a positive image in the critical eyes of the media. Poorly drafted press releases usually end up in the rubbish bin and reduce the credibility of your group.

To enhance the effectiveness of your press releases, note the following:

- Use a media release letterhead which reflects your group's identity - keep the design uncluttered and avoid using small typeface.
- Make sure you grab the reader's attention in the headline and the first sentence.
- Place the most important facts at the top and then arrange your material in descending order of importance. Do not attempt to get everything into the first (lead) paragraph, which should consist of no more than 30 words.
- Ensure material is accurate. Check all facts especially spelling of people's names and titles.
- Keep it short, preferable a single page, two pages at the most. (Keep to 400 words or fewer).
- Ensure it is dated and contains a contact name and phone/fax numbers. Make sure the contact person and telephone number are obtainable when journalists are likely to call, many journalists work at night or early in the morning.
- Know the copy deadlines of your target media outlets.
- Make sure you issue your release on the best day for maximum coverage. Generally, a release issued on Monday or Tuesday will get better coverage than one released on Friday.
- State the timing for release if not for immediate use, ie, embargoed until date and/or time.
- Attach any visual material, photographs, logos, maps, diagrams

In terms of media release writing style, note the following:

- Use simple language and sentence construction. Avoid the use of jargon and clichés.
- Use positive words and phrases.
- Use short paragraphs - often one sentence is enough. Limit sentences to 25-30 words.
- Write names of people and organisations in full the first time they appear in the text. Add abbreviations in brackets afterwards.
- Use quotes to make it more interesting.
- Write in the third person e.g. 'he said' or 'she said', not 'I said' or 'I was'.
- Do not use underlining - underlining is an editor's instruction to print those words in italics.
- Spell out numbers from one to nine, except for dates, times, prices, weights and measures, then use figures until they become unwieldy thousands of millions.
- Do not use the % sign, spell out "per cent" as two words.
- Limit the use of capitals.

Radio interviews:

- Arrive early for studio interview.
- Speak with producer before interview.
- Check on time allowed.
- If program is going out live, listen to program beforehand.
- Relax and breath calmly.
- Prepare and key words and phrases sheet about themes you want to speak about.
- Leave an information sheet with contact details.

10. Resources for Community Engagement

Useful Websites:

- Australasia Evaluation Society - www.aes.asn.au
- Aspen Institute - www.aspeninstitute.org
- Bank of I.D.E.A.S. - www.bankofideas.com.au
- Conversation Café - www.conversationcafe.org
- Energy Networks Association - www.energynetworks.com.au
- Everyday Democracy – www.everyday-democracy.org
- Future Search - www.futuresearch.net
- International Association for Public participation- www.iap2.org.au
- National Center for Dialogue and Deliberation – www.ncdd.org
- New Democracy - www.newdemocracy.com.au
- Open Space - www.openspaceworld.org
- Photo Voice - www.photovoice.com
- Results Based Accountability- www.raguide.org
- Tamarack, Canada - www.tamarackcommunity.ca
- World Café - www.theworldcafe.com

Useful Publications:

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- Bank of I.D.E.A.S. (2014) *The Business Expansion and Retention (BEAR) Program Handbook*, Kalamunda.
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- Department of Health and Human Services (2018), *Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit*. Available at: <https://dhhs.vic.gov.au/file/6686/download?token=zqh4H3zq>
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11. Ten Great TED Talks Related to Community Building

Angela Blanchard *'Building on the Strengths of Communities'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaX5DUGC1CU>

Ron Finley *'A Guerrilla Gardener in South Central LA'*

https://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerilla_gardener_in_south_central_la

Shani Graham *'Take a Street and Build a Community'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1WSkXWSJac>

DeAmon Harges *'ABCD and Making the Invisible Visible'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6yiRXVP90g>

Celeste Headlee *'10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation'*

https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation?language=en

Ken Robinson *'Do Schools kill Creativity?'* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY>

Cormac Russell *'Sustainable Community Development -from what's wrong to what's strong'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5xR4QB1ADw>

Ernesto Sirolli *'Want to Help Someone? Shut Up and Listen'*

https://www.ted.com/talks/ernesto_sirolli_want_to_help_someone_shut_up_and_listen

Robert Waldinger *'What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness.'*

https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_waldinger_what_makes_a_good_life_lessons_from_the_longest_study_on_happiness?language=en

Pam Warhurst *'How We Can eat Our Landscapes' -*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vghx4Etdvr0>

In addition, the following two YouTubes are worth watching –

Ken Diehm *'Participatory Budgeting'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBhzzkFSWeA>

Sacred Suds *'Getting to Know the Neighbours'* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2urIYfYLY-4>

12. 28 Useful Tips for Recruiting Volunteers

1. Remember the number one reason given by people for volunteering is '*someone asked me*'...and usually someone they know and respect well. Simply Ask, Ask and Ask!
2. Recognise that volunteers are motivated by a host of motivations – opportunities for social interaction, friendships, skill development, self development, recognition, altruism, ideological commitment, incentives etc. – avoid a single recruitment message and ensure promotional material appeals to a multitude of motivations. Also remember, the two questions any recruitment material needs to anticipate are 'What's in it for me?' and "Can I do it?'
3. Remember that volunteer recruitment is fundamentally about building relationships. Relationship building takes time and involves growing trust. Commit time to networking, lots of conversations and keep in touch with prospective volunteers for when the time for engagement may be appropriate.
4. Create a Volunteer Recruitment Team to design, implement and regularly evaluate a Volunteer Recruitment Strategy – include volunteers in the Team.
5. Realise that happy and satisfied volunteers represent the best promotion for any organisation – ensure you have volunteers as part of the Retain, recognise and Reward Strategy.
6. Engage a social media savvy volunteer to develop a social media component to the Strategy- there is a multitude of tools that can be used.
7. Regularly use local media to highlight the contributions of current volunteers and to promote the excitement of volunteer opportunities. Issue regular press releases, request regular talk back times with local radio, develop personal relationships with local media contact, seek a regular guest spot on the local radio, create your own media stories etc.
8. Collaborate with other community organisations to undertake a '*Passion and Skills Audit*' of local residents – invite people to voluntarily engage around those interests and passions.
9. Collaborate and network with other community organisations in volunteer promotion, recruitment and acknowledgement e.g. annual Community Organisation Fair, town entrance sign praising local volunteer contribution, bumper stickers with volunteering messages, annual Community Volunteer Recognition event
10. Critically evaluate procedures and red tape involved in recruitment- minimise any barriers and complexity.
11. Provide an *Information Kit* for distribution to perspective volunteers. Include clear and simple job descriptions, an information sheet that answers the most frequently asked questions and testimonials of current volunteers.
12. Keep in touch with ex volunteers – send newsletter, invite to functions, ask their advice etc.- their circumstances for dropping out may change, and they could be an invaluable advocate and recruiter of others.
13. Use exit interviews with departing volunteers to provide feedback needed for continuous improvement.
14. Maintain adequate volunteer insurance cover and clearly outline details in any volunteer information. Many people are fearful of legal litigation.
15. Have an organisational *Suggestion Box* for recruitment ideas.
16. Include a dedicated section on volunteers and their invaluable contribution on the organisation's website.
17. Utilise the help, services and resources of the local and state Volunteer Centre.

18. Discover who is new in town (eg via friendly real estate agent). Personally contact and welcome to the community. Share information about the organisation and opportunities for volunteer engagement Invite participation.
19. Design and produce an interesting and eye catching organisational name badge and/or promotional shirt. Distribute to everyone associated with the organisation and ask them to wear to any community networking event and use as a conversational starter.
20. Use special events to promote the organisation and recruit e.g. Saturday morning sausage sizzle in a prominent community location, Open Day, Information Booth at community events like markets etc.
21. Sponsor and find ways to associate with prominent and respected community events, and always ensure there is an opportunity to promote volunteer involvement opportunities.
22. Be opportunistic in generating opportunities for positive publicity and the organisation and its contribution to community/society. Do not be backward in coming forward about the importance of the organisation. Nominate the organisation and its volunteers for relevant awards.
23. Develop the fun and humour side of the organisation and promote this aspect to the wider public.
24. With the support of local businesses, develop a range of product and service discounts and incentives that are given to all volunteers.
25. Regularly photograph the group of smiling current volunteers and use as in publicity initiatives. Be creative – e.g. have them standing around an empty chair with the caption '*This seat is reserved for you!*'
26. Liaise with local schools about creating fun and interesting opportunities for students to become volunteers.
27. Commit time to capturing and distributing the stories of the organisation and its volunteers. Remember the world is not made up of atoms, but stories! People relate to stories, not facts and spread sheets!
28. Ensure any volunteer publicity uses power and passionate words. Yale University research have found the following words spark interest from people – *gain, achieve, win, secret, avoid, special, easy, health, earn, discover, love, free, unique, amazing, save, profit, new, results, you, get* and *magic!*

13. 83 Ways to Retain, Recognise and Reward Volunteers

1. Never stop saying 'Thank You' - catch people doing things right and thank them on the spot
2. Create a 'Retain, Recognise and Reward Volunteers Initiative' and involve volunteers in its design and implementation
3. Regularly review and vary your 'Retain, Recognise and Reward Volunteers Initiative'
4. Create a specific budget for volunteer recognition and reward
5. Establish a volunteer suggestion box
6. Acknowledge volunteers by names at public events
7. Reimburse any 'out of pocket' expenses
8. Send birthday cards with personalised messages
9. Hold an annual volunteer community barbecue
10. Invite volunteers to staff meetings
11. Create a photo 'Wall of Fame' bulletin board to highlight the work of volunteers- make it ever-changing- highlight a different volunteer each week
12. Recognise and support the personal needs and challenges
13. Establish a volunteer recognition board in a prominent position
14. Organise informal morning teas
15. Always greet by name – learn ways to remember people's names
16. Provide continuous training opportunities
17. Continuously ask for opinions and ideas
18. Hold regular idea generation sessions
19. Regularly organise photos of volunteers and their initiatives in local newspapers
20. Take time to talk about their job with each volunteer
21. Write references
22. Organise volunteers to attend conferences and external training opportunities
23. Write personal 'thank you' notes
24. Invite participation in policy formation
25. Celebrate outstanding projects and achievements
26. Nominate individuals for volunteer awards
27. Carefully match volunteer interests and skills to the right jobs
28. Plan staff and volunteer joint social events
29. Organise occasional extravaganzas and surprise parties
30. Take out an annual paid advertisement in local newspaper to take all volunteers- include a list of the names of all volunteers
31. Send letters of appreciation to volunteers' families
32. Write to the employer of the volunteer highlighting the contribution of the volunteer and thanking the employer for their support
33. Say 'we missed you' when absent
34. Instigate special awards for extraordinary achievements
35. Fully orientate new volunteers – check with newer volunteers about ways to improve the orientation process
36. Send Christmas cards with a personalised message

37. Organise community-wide, cooperative, inter-agency volunteer recognition events
38. Produce and distribute an organisational T – Shirt to all volunteers^[L]_[SEP]
39. Offer personal praise and recognition on the job, through the media and at public occasions
40. Give complimentary tickets to volunteers for special events and functions^[L]_[SEP]
41. Arrange discounts for volunteers at local businesses and events
42. Award life memberships, VIP recognition certificates^[L]_[SEP]
43. Hold social events in honour of volunteers
44. Create volunteer skill development opportunities
45. Farewell volunteers when they are retiring or moving away from the area
46. Use exit interviews to provide feedback to ensure continuous improvement
47. Arrange accreditation e.g. Certificate 1 in Active Volunteering
48. Organise an annual '*Volunteer Appreciation Dinner*'
49. Administer a volunteer satisfaction survey every six months
50. Offer volunteers the opportunity to change roles
51. Discover what aspects of the organisation's procedures that volunteers find irritating and unnecessary
52. Ask volunteers what the organisation can do to make their roles easier and more satisfying
53. Create and distribute a '*Great Work*' postcard
54. Use low cost creative ideas to improve the attractiveness of work facilities
55. Ensure all recognition is specific, frequent and personalised- and celebrate in front of as many people as possible
56. Instigate a welcome morning tea for all new volunteers
57. Create a buddy system which teams a new volunteer with an experienced volunteer
58. Provide gift vouchers donated by local businesses as volunteer rewards- match vouchers to volunteer interests
59. Create a personalised data base for each volunteer including significant dates, events and sporting teams in their lives; and the skills that they would be prepared to share or learn
60. Ensure recognition is shared with others who are significant to the volunteer being honoured
61. Highlight the work of individual volunteers in organisational newsletters and website
62. Give volunteers some operational freedom – delegate some responsibility and give authority to make some decisions
63. Treat volunteers as '*insiders*' and keep them in the communication loop
64. Surprise and delight volunteers by knowing and acknowledging upcoming events in their lives and that of their families e.g. birthdays, marriages, births, graduations etc.
65. Encourage expressions of peer recognition
66. Bring volunteers and senior management together in informal '*meet and greet*' sessions
67. Host forums with senior management in the '*hot seat*'
68. Organise a '*New Ideas*' Workshop to generate better ways to improve services, streamline procedures and develop better recognition methods
69. Take out several volunteers for coffee or lunch each month and use the occasion to seek feedback
70. Find someone who does great portraits or cartoons from photographs, and ask them to draw volunteers. Present a framed version to hang in the organisation or to take home
71. Designate special car bays for volunteers
72. Celebrate volunteer birthdays
73. Send an inspirational note to volunteers' others – partner, children and close friends expressing the positive difference the volunteer has made to the organisation.
74. Organise an '*Open House*' event for family and friends of volunteers to visit the organisation

75. Use unusual special days of the year to remember volunteers e.g. 6 February is '*Compliments Day*', 1 July is '*Jokes Day*' and 5 October is '*Do Something Nice Day*' – see www.holidayinsight.com
76. Issue regular press releases to local media highlighting the contribution of volunteers Do not forget to attach photograph – see
77. Collaborate with local government and other local organisations to create a hero welcome town sign that thanks the volunteers in the community
78. Collect and share appreciation stories/testimonials coming from the community and users of the organisation's services- encourage users of services to comment on outstanding service
79. Use the organisation's website as a cyber bulletin board- ensure there is section just about volunteers
80. Offer to include free advertising of the services and products of any volunteer running their own businesses – enquire whether they would like to offer a discount arrangement to other volunteers and staff as a win-win opportunity
81. Establish and name special Volunteer Awards after long term and committed volunteers- whenever presented, use opportunity to remind audience of the volunteer after whom the Award is named
82. Create lots of opportunities for volunteers to socialise, recreate and network with each other
83. Welcome and encourage feedback from volunteers and be attentive to complaints and ideas.

14. 52 Ways to Connect with your Neighbours

(Compiled by the City of Kwinana, Western Australia)

1. **Reclaim your corners:** organise up to four long table lunches, one on each street corner or verge. Invite every house on your street and ask them to bring a plate.
2. **Listening booth:** take a bench out into your street domain, put up a sign and call it the street listening booth. Take some time out to listen to your neighbours' stories. (why not see if your neighbours are interested in recording oral histories of your street)
3. **Chalk drawings:** get some boxes of chalk and ask your neighbours and their children to decorate your street. (road and footpath space, get permission before using driveways) Extend the activity by having a street art competition. Don't forget road safety.
4. **Decorative verandahs:** decorate your front verandah and post it on Instagram. Check out your neighbours' decorations and start conversations about them. Expand by inviting your neighbours to decorate their verandah. Make up and invitation, or use the one on the City website, and put it in your neighbours' letterboxes.
5. **Street swap meet:** organise a street swap meet in your garage. "My kids have outgrown this, maybe your kids would love it." Invite all of your neighbours to attend.
6. **Plant swap:** organise a plant swap day and invite your neighbours to take cuttings from your garden and you take some from theirs.
7. **Verge planting day:** organise a street verge planting day – be proud of where you live. Access the City's Adopt a verge program by calling 9439 0200.
8. **Street fundraiser:** get your street behind supporting a worthy cause and crowd fund it.
9. **Ice-cream party:** organise a street ice-cream party. Each household brings a different flavour tub of ice-cream to share.
10. **Book and magazine swap:** organise a street book and magazine swap day.
11. **Walking group:** start a street walking group – with or without dogs, where children in prams and on bikes are welcome.
12. **Social media:** create a closed street Facebook or Instagram group. Invite your neighbours to join via a letterbox drop. Use the group to share ideas, swap items or services and generally support each other.
13. **Treasure hunt:** organise a street treasure hunt – finish with a BBQ.
14. **Talent show:** organise a street talent show – everyone brings refreshments. Children love to show off their talents.
15. **Hello Cards:** children can create a hello card and put it in a neighbour's letterboxes. Each household with children creates them for different houses, particularly for residents who do not have children or live on their own.
16. **Work exchange:** "I will mow your lawn this month, you mow mine next month" or "I mow your lawn in exchange for you doing something different for me" This works well and saves people money on services while creating relationships.

17. **Front yard sporting match viewing:** bring the TV into the front yard and neighbours come together to watch the match. Everyone brings their own refreshments.
18. **Pot luck dinner:** everyone brings a dish to share. This could be in a home, backyard, front yard or as a long table dinner.
19. **Street directory:** include everyone's contact details and ask each person to provide a funky fact about themselves to make it fun. You can even include a section where people can write what they are interested in being involved in.
20. **Roaming Gnome:** this is a street gnome that roams the street. If the gnome ends up in your yard it is your turn to relocate him. Try to be as creative as you can to make it fun. Maybe the gnome will be greeting the postman.
21. **Random acts of kindness:** encourage your children to do random acts of kindness for others in the street particularly the elderly or those who live on their own and new residents.
22. **Street book exchange/library:** build a street exchange box. It can be as simple or as fancy as you like. Neighbours can then swap books, magazines, jigsaw puzzles or board games.
23. **Bunnings gardening workshop:** some Bunnings stores will host free community garden workshops for groups. You can learn tips and tricks for DIY or gardening and you invite all of your neighbours to get involved. Contact your local Bunnings Activity Organiser for more information.
24. **Community project:** develop a community project for your whole street. Example: build bird feeders for the trees in your street.
25. **Book club:** start up a book club by inviting your neighbours along for an afternoon tea. Take turns choosing a book to read. Meet as often as suits you and your neighbours.
26. **Communal fruit trees:** plant fruit trees in your front yard and invite others in your street to do the same. Children can pick fruit whenever they like. The more varieties of tree in the street, the less fruit people need to buy and the more fruit children will eat.
27. **Garage sale:** invite all your neighbours to come together for a combined garage sale on the same day.
28. **Front yard movie night:** set up the TV, or projector if someone has one, set up chairs and blankets, make popcorn and have a family movie night. Families can bring a picnic dinner, drinks and snacks.
29. **Walking tour:** if a resident knows about the history of your area, they can lead a walking tour for all of the newer residents.
30. **Compost bin or worm farm:** create a communal street compost or worm farm for everyone's vegetable waste. Some residents will need to take the lead on this one to ensure it is managed properly. Everyone can share the compost or worm juice that is produced. Make use of the City's composting and worm farm workshops. Call 9439 0200 for more information.
31. **Photography competition and/or exhibition:** invite neighbours to take photos of the things they love about their street. Exhibit the photos in the street and ask a local elected member or other person of interest to judge. Request a donated prize from a local business. Host a celebration for the photography competition. A community BBQ or party.
32. **Stargazing night:** get all of the children out into the street or front yards to do stargazing. This will work best if the house lights are off to reduce light pollution. If any of the residents own binoculars or telescope, even better, bring them out. You can find out when interesting things are happening in our night sky from the Perth Observatory.

33. **Culture nights:** if there are people living in your street from diverse backgrounds, suggest hosting culture nights where you celebrate someone's culture. Have a meal, play music and maybe have a performance of their culture. Do this throughout the year for each culture represented on your street. Don't forget to celebrate your own culture as well.
34. **Fairy lights:** put fairy lights in trees in your front yard and invite your neighbours to do the same. You can even host a get together under the lights once they are up.
35. **Street cricket:** host a game of cricket in yours and your neighbours' front yards. Invite all of the children and parents to get involved.
36. **Lego:** put a blanket and some boxes of Lego in the front yard and invite the neighbours to come and build with Lego. Remember, no one is ever too old to build with Lego so don't just invite neighbours with children.
37. **Rhymetime or Storytime:** hold a Rhymetime or Storytime in your front yard. Invite your neighbours through a letterbox drop. Neighbours can take turns in running each one.
38. **Nerf gun war:** Have a Nerf Gun war in the front yard. Invite neighbours to bring along their nerf guns and bullets and join with the kids to have a battle. This is fun even for adults so don't forget to invite your neighbours who don't have children, although they may have to borrow a gun.
39. **Homework club:** start a homework club where children can do their homework together and help each other. This is especially good if you have neighbours from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as it can sometimes be difficult for parents to help their children with their homework. Invite neighbours to be involved. Include neighbours without children as they may enjoy helping the children in ways such as listening to them read.
40. **Card game:** invite your neighbours to a street card game. Set up a table in the front yard or a park and invite neighbours to come along and play some cards.
41. **Kite flying afternoon:** host a Kite flying afternoon in the street or Local Park.
42. **Easter egg hunt:** invite your neighbours to participate in a street wide Easter egg hunt. You can ask those who say they will participate to donate a packet of Easter eggs to reduce the cost.
43. **Street cubby building day:** have a cubby building day. Children can work together to build cubby's or visit each other's cubby houses.
44. **Wheelie bin decorating:** have a wheelie bin decorating competition using temporary decorations, chalk or other removable medium. Please note that wheelie bins are the property of the City and it is an offence to permanently mark or damage your bin. Why not use this activity to encourage recycling and responsible waste practices within your street. Contact the City's Waste Minimisation Officer for advice on 9439 0200.
45. **Selfie booth:** set up a marquee with simple props and invite neighbours to come and use the "selfie booth". Ask them to share the photos on the street's social media pages.
46. **Birthday party for your street:** have a birthday party for your street. It does not have to be a true date, just choose a date and each year that date becomes your street's birthday. Celebrate with a children's style birthday party in the street, in a park or on the front lawn. Invite all of the households on the street. In place of a present, everyone brings a plate. Go all out and decorate, have games etc.
47. **Walking school bus:** if your street is within walking distance of the local school, allocate a time each morning and afternoon that you will be walking to school. Invite other parents in your street to join you in the walk to school creating a walking school bus.

48. **Street tree:** decorate a significant tree in your street and dedicate it to be a Street Christmas Tree. Invite your neighbours to also decorate the tree.

49. **Roaming morning tea:** get together with your neighbours and plan a roaming morning tea for each month. Each month, a different neighbour hosts the morning tea and everyone brings a plate.

50. **Car washing Day:** set up an area for the children in the street to wash the neighbours' cars. Invite your neighbours to bring their cars over through a letterbox drop.

51. **DIY mud kitchen:** children love mud kitchens. Set up a mud kitchen in the front yard and invite the neighbours to bring their children to play in it. Parents can have a cuppa together while the children play. (For suggestions simply google mud kitchen ideas, there are so many examples)

52. **Street history:** interview your neighbours and put together a street history. Written or verbal. Some residents may even have some photos of the street from times gone by that you could use.