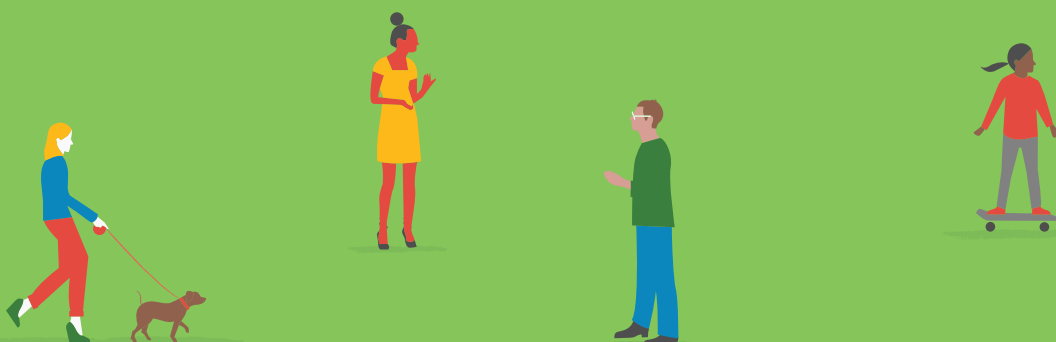




Inclusive Community Engagement:

in a time of physical distancing



Inclusive Community Engagement



Inclusive community engagement recognises that everyone has a role to play in public engagement. It provides people with opportunities to participate by reducing barriers, creating connections and engaging in meaningful and supportive ways.

This is a supplement to Capire's Inclusive Community Engagement Toolkit. The toolkit was originally published in 2012, with a second edition published in 2016. To download a copy of our Inclusive Engagement Toolkit (2016), please visit www.capire.com.au

In a time of physical distancing, leading practice principles for inclusive community engagement are:

1 We ask if it is the right time to engage

Never make presumptions. Always ask your community if it is the right time to engage. Most peoples' lives have changed significantly, and they may have limited time or capacity to participate. If it is the right time, great. But if it is not, consider how you can keep connected to the community until it is the right time for a conversation.

2 We give people time and information to participate

Think strategically about all the information the community needs to support their participation. This includes purpose, format, timing and language. Consider the time that participants require to digest and understand this information to ensure informed participation. Make yourself available via telephone or email to answer questions and provide clarification prior to the engagement commencing.

3 We provide people with multiple opportunities to participate

Yes, digital is very convenient in a world of physical distancing; but what if digital is not possible? Most people have a phone, most people have a postal address. Your toolkit should always have a range of tools with different delivery methods to ensure all community members have the opportunity to participate. Remember, accessible public engagement is no longer a nice to have. In government decision-making, it's a must have.

4 We support people to participate

All tools need to support inclusive and accessible engagement. This includes using translators or interpreters; providing information and materials in languages other than English; in other formats including audio or large font; or hard copies of materials mailed to their home. It also means asking the community what support they need to participate before the engagement commences.

In a time of physical distancing there has been a shift and focus to digital engagement tools. Some people may not have the digital literacy to navigate and successfully use engagement tools. It is important to provide support as they familiarise themselves with these new approaches, building their confidence and capacity. Support can come in many forms but could include tutorials, Q&A sessions or 'live' IT support.

5 We understand the community and target diverse groups

In all engagement it is important to have diversity of participants and therefore a diversity of views and experiences. In the new world of physical distancing quiet voices might become silent, so it is even more important to understand the groups, cohorts and individuals which make up the community. Often these are the people accessed by physically going to where they are and undertaking face-to-face engagement. Spend time understanding your community and identify connection points they have with other groups or networks, and link in with these.

6 We create opportunities for community connection

There has never been a more important time to provide the community with opportunities to connect with each other through your engagement. Design these informal opportunities into your process, providing space for community-to-community discussion and relationship building. This could include neighbour interviews (at a responsible distance); 'meet and greet' discussions in your virtual focus group; and creating spaces in your online engagement where people can introduce themselves and share their interests.

Understanding and overcoming barriers to engagement

Evidence demonstrates that those most likely to participate in traditional public engagement processes are those with fewer social, cultural, environmental or economic barriers. Whereas those people less likely to participate are those who have multiple barriers. These barriers could relate to personal resources; motivation and attitude; and cultural factors.

In a time of physical distancing, some common barriers to engagement are:

PERSONAL RESOURCES	MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE	CULTURAL FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited personal resilience • Limited access to the internet • Limited digital literacy • Limited education and capacity • Limited money • Physical and mental health issues • Limited mobility • Geographic isolation • Disability and sensory impairments • Limited confidence • Limited social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge of benefits of engagement • Limited knowledge of engagement activities • Limited interest in the subject • Limited understanding of the subject • Limited trust of decision-makers • Consultation 'fatigue' • Unmet expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority groups • Language and literacy • Values and beliefs • Community divisions



Inclusive community engagement recognises engagement barriers and creates an approach to help engage all members of the community. There are different groups in different settings who have multiple barriers and may find it difficult to participate in engagement.

Some of these groups are:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless people • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people • People with a disability • Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Questioning (LGBTIQ+) people • Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people • Children • People with health issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people • People in prison • Residents of public housing • Parents and carers • Asylum seekers and refugees • Hearing, speech and vision impaired people • Older people • People living in rural or regional areas • International students
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In presenting these groups, we recognise that not every individual in these groups may be harder to reach. The circumstances of each individual within these groups will vary depending on the topic, location, timing or past experiences and your engagement should adapt accordingly.

In the time of physical distancing many barriers to engagement become much more pronounced. Have your barriers to participation changed with the introduction of physical distancing?

What's in an inclusive engagement toolkit in a time of physical distancing?

When selecting engagement tools it is important to find a balance between your project's needs and the community's needs. The community's needs can be addressed by looking closely at their barriers to engagement, using techniques which address or overcome these barriers, and opening up the opportunity for meaningful engagement.

Key types of engagement include:



- **Information** to build awareness and knowledge about a project or issue. Materials can be single purpose or be produced as a series of communication tools as the project progresses.



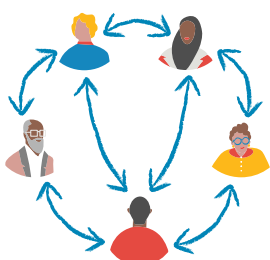
- **Self-directed** engagement is the most convenient way for people to participate as they can choose where and when the engagement occurs. It also enables large numbers of people to participate as they don't require the hands-on management of the project team.



- **One-to-one** engagement enables flexibility, engaging in multiple ways and in locations that work best for your participant and their needs. One-to-one techniques can be used to discuss sensitive topics and allows people to discuss information in-depth. It also allows people to share information anonymously.



- **Small group** (< 20 participants) engagement targets groups within the community and allows information sharing and building of trust with participants. Small groups can be used to focus on a specific group or cohort, and activities and communication styles can be tailored to meet their needs. They enable community connections and create a forum for like-minded people to share their experiences.



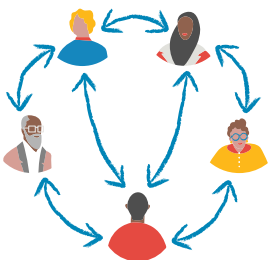


- **Large group** (> 20 participants) engagement provides an opportunity to bring different individuals and groups together and hear from a range of people with diverse perspectives. This type of engagement can encourage dialogue and debate between different groups. Large group engagement typically requires a range of tools to be used to meet the varying needs of participants.

When designing an engagement process, it is important to address barriers to engagement to maximise interest and participation. Described below are the barriers to engagement and the types of engagement that can address or minimise the barriers.

		Communication	Self-directed	One-to-one	Small group	Large Group
PERSONAL RESOURCES	Limited personal resilience	◆		◆	◆	
	Limited access to the internet	◆	◆	◆		
	Limited digital literacy	◆	◆	◆		
	Limited education and capacity	◆		◆		◆
	Limited money	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
	Physical and mental health issues	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	Limited mobility	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
	Geographic isolation	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
	Disability and sensory impairments	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	Limited confidence	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	Limited social networks	◆	◆	◆	◆	
MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE	Limited knowledge of benefits of engagement	◆		◆	◆	◆
	Limited knowledge of engagement activities	◆		◆	◆	◆
	Limited interest in the subject	◆		◆	◆	◆
	Limited understanding of the subject	◆		◆	◆	◆
	Limited trust of decision-makers	◆		◆	◆	
	Consultation 'fatigue'	◆		◆	◆	
	Unmet expectations	◆		◆		
CULTURE	Minority groups	◆		◆	◆	◆
	Language and literacy	◆		◆	◆	
	Values and beliefs	◆	◆	◆	◆	
	Community divisions	◆	◆	◆	◆	

Some examples of inclusive engagement tools are provided below.

TYPES	EXAMPLE TOOLS
Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard copy or email mail-outs of project information and opportunities for participation. • Social media, radio and print media to create awareness of the project and engagement opportunities. • Short Message Service (SMS) to make significant announcements. • Short videos to launch a project, provide updates and respond to key questions or concerns.
Self-directed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys in both digital and hard copy format. • Online forums, mapping tools and polling with well-crafted and thoughtful questions and supporting information. • Inviting submissions in a range of formats including video, audio or written. • Automated telephone feedback service for people to provide structured feedback.
One-to-one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone or video interview, briefing or discussion. Give people the option and let them book a time. • Telephone survey conducted by an experienced interviewer to ensure context can be provided and questions can be answered. • Telephone hotline for people to call to find out more about a project, ask questions and provide their feedback.
Small group (< 20 participants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual focus group with a group of community members. Workbooks provided in hard or soft copy prior to the session for participants to complete. • Virtual consultative group meetings using structured formats and online meeting management tools. • Virtual walking tour or site visit to provide participants with an understanding of a physical space, allowing them to ask questions and participate in discussion. • Telephone conference calls with a small group to provide key information and an opportunity for participants to ask questions.
Large group (> 20 participants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinar to communicate key information to a community or stakeholder group to build interest and understanding. • Virtual workshop to collaboratively explore issues, opportunities and priorities. • Virtual deliberative engagement process to allow a group of community members to have in-depth discussions, identify solutions and make recommendations to decision-makers. • Live stream a 'virtual town hall meeting' and allow members of the public to ask questions.

About Capire

Capire is a specialist community engagement company. We design and deliver tailored engagement strategies to build understanding, create local ownership and to inform sustainable decision-making.

We use a lens of diversity, inclusion and accessibility to maximise social benefit on all our projects. Our team are skilled listeners, communicators, researchers, facilitators and problem solvers.

For further information about Capire and how we might be able to assist you, please contact:

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