A guide to planning your community and stakeholder engagement strategy

Community and stakeholder engagement is central to the Department of Planning and Community Development's goal of leading and supporting liveable communities.

The Department recognises the need to work together with stakeholders and communities in order to deliver improved outcomes. Therefore, an engagement approach is adopted when working with all stakeholders including staff, state and local government, industry bodies, peak organisations, community groups and residents.

The Community Engagement Project has been building the Department's engagement capacity, focusing on four key areas: communication and knowledge sharing; innovation and contemporary practice; embedding community and stakeholder engagement; and improving skills and capabilities.

Project achievements to date have included: the endorsement of the *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation* as the Department's framework for engagement; the establishment of engagement capabilities for staff; the development of a policy framework; staff training, including a train-the-trainer course; the launch of an engagement forum and resources, workshops with engagement specialists; and partnering in the establishment of a Whole of Government Community Engagement Network.

These guidelines have been developed to help you to plan your projects, programs and policy initiatives using an engagement approach. The process draws on the work of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Transport as well as the extensive experience of staff from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD). These steps are not intended to replace training in community engagement, but to guide you in transferring your training into practice. This approach makes use of the *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation* (see Appendix A).

At DPCD, when we talk about community engagement, we are talking about engaging with a broad range of stakeholders including:

- Individuals and groups within the community;

- External stakeholders – such as government agencies, local government and businesses; and

- Internal stakeholders – such as staff across the Department.

It is recommended that you set aside time to work through the following process with your project team in order to make best use of the skills and expertise at your disposal. For a small project you should allow at least an hour for planning. For larger projects more time will be required.

1

Clarify your engagement objective

It's important that you are clear about why you are engaging with the community and stakeholders.

Consider the following questions:

- Why do you need to engage?

- What would successful engagement look like?

It may be useful to create a list of negotiable and non-negotiable factors for your project or program. The negotiable factors are those that the community and other stakeholders can influence, while the non-negotiable factors are those that have already been decided. If your project has no negotiable factors, your engagement will not go beyond the level of 'Inform' on the IAP2 Spectrum.

2

Identify your stakeholders

Create a list of your stakeholders. In thinking about your stakeholders, consider residents and community organisations, departments and agencies, local government, businesses and key personnel.

The right of people to participate in public life without discrimination is enshrined in *Victoria's Charter of Human Rights*. Make sure you give some thought to people or groups who may be at risk of being excluded from participation – for example Indigenous groups, young people, those with disabilities, etc. DPCD's *Access and Inclusion* intranet page provides further advice on some of these issues.

In identifying your stakeholders consider the following questions:

- Who is responsible for the project?
- Who makes the decisions?
- Who can influence decisions?
- Who are the project partners?
- Who owns related projects?
- Who will be impacted by project outcomes?
- Who are the beneficiaries?
- Who can slow or stop the project?
- Who can make the project more effective?
- Who can contribute resources?
- Who may be excluded from participating?

3

Analyse your stakeholders and select your level of engagement

DPCD uses the *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation* (Appendix A) as its framework for community engagement.

Different stakeholders will have different levels of interest and influence over your project, depending on a range of issues. These may include their contributions to the project, decision-making power, ability to slow or halt the project and the ability to impact on the effectiveness of outcomes.

You should also consider the promise that you are making to your participants:

- Are you promising to keep them informed of progress?

- Are you promising to listen to their ideas?

- Are you promising to work with your stakeholders to find solutions?

Use the *Stakeholder Analysis Template* (Appendix B) to analyse your stakeholders and determine an appropriate level of engagement. Keep in mind that the level of engagement you select for your stakeholders may change as the project progresses, so you may need to reassess at a later stage.

4

Select your activities and decide on your message

Section A: When will you engage and what will your stakeholders contribute?

You should engage with your community and stakeholders at key decision-making points throughout your project so that they are able to influence decisions.

Generally, there are three key decision-making points where you will engage with the community and stakeholders: during scoping or ideas generation, during analysis (where options and alternatives are considered) and during decision-making. You don't need to engage with all your stakeholders at every point, but you do need to be clear about when you will be engaging with your stakeholders and what you will be asking them to contribute. It's important to remember that engagement is a two-way process and you should always aim to feed back ideas or decisions to your participants.

Usually, when you engage with your stakeholders, you do so to progress your project in some way. For each stage of the project, clarify your project objective:

- What is your project aiming to achieve at each stage?

- What is your deliverable at this stage?

Then, think about who you need to engage and what your engagement objective will be at each stage of your project. For instance:

- Are you engaging with residents to generate ideas?

- Are you engaging with community organisations to seek feedback on options?

- Are you asking a reference group to make recommendations?

- Are you engaging with your project partners to make a decision?

Section B: Select appropriate engagement activities

Having clarified your objectives, you can now select the engagement tools that will suit your needs. The Department of Sustainability and Environment publishes detailed information about a range of engagement activities in the *Effective Engagement Kit – Book 3: The Engagement Toolkit*.

In selecting your engagement activities, you need to consider a number of factors:

- What timeframe do you have for each activity?

- What budget do you have?

- Do you, or others in your business unit, have the skills to facilitate engagement activities?

- Are there experts within your organisation or within your partner agencies who can assist?

- Will you need to employ a contractor to carry out your engagement activities?

Its also important to consider access and inclusion issues and think about how you will address any barriers to participation for specific groups. How are you going to reach people who may be at risk of being excluded? Will you need to arrange translators? Will people with disabilities be able to participate? What about people who have limited transport options?

The *Access and Inclusion* intranet page provides further advice on some of these issues and you might also consider contacting relevant people in *People and Community Advocacy (PACA)* to ensure that you are addressing barriers to participation for specific groups.

Section C: Think about your communication message

Throughout the engagement process, you will be talking to your stakeholders and the community. As such, it's a good idea to clearly define your communication message for each stage of your engagement. These messages will then be repeated when you speak to people and in any documentation that you develop for your engagement activities (posters, advertisements, etc).

To develop your communication messages, consider:

- Why you are engaging your stakeholders?

- What benefits will your stakeholders gain from engagement?

- How will their input be used?

Complete the *Engagement Planning Template* (Appendix C) before continuing. Start by writing down your engagement objective.

5

Consider any engagement risks

As with other project activities, you should consider the risks involved with your engagement activities and develop a strategy to mitigate these risks.

Complete the *Engagement Risk Assessment Template* (Appendix D).

6

Review your plan and celebrate successes

It's a good idea to identify key points where you and your team can review and update the plan and celebrate your successes. You can also take this opportunity to evaluate your progress and gain feedback. The end of each stage may be an appropriate time for this to occur.

Within your team, it may help to consider the following questions:

- What has worked well?
- What has been challenging?
- What has been learnt?
- What has been achieved?
- What could have been done differently?

7

Evaluate your engagement strategy

Finally, in order to measure the effectiveness of your strategy and learn from your experience, you should undertake an evaluation of your engagement strategy. Ideally, you should plan your evaluation at the commencement of your project. DPCD's *Evaluation Step-by-Step Guide* will take you through an evaluation planning process that can be used for this purpose.

Additional resources

For more detailed information about engagement processes, please see the Department of Sustainability and Environment's *Effective Engagement Kit*.
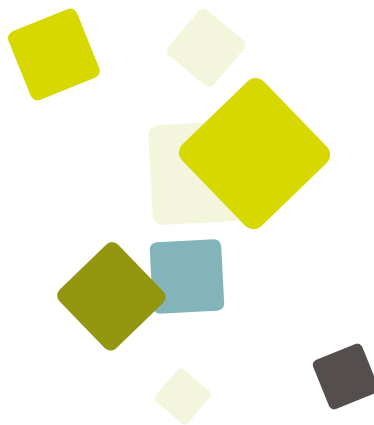
IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT →

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TECHNIQUES	• Fact sheets • Web sites • Open houses	• Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberative polling	• Citizen advisory committees • Consensus building • Participatory decision-making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decision

Source: International Association for Public Participation *www.iap2.org*

Stakeholder Analysis Template

Give some thought to the stake or interest your stakeholders have in project outcomes.
Then think about the level of resources, influence or power your stakeholders can access
to support (or oppose) the project. Map each of your stakeholders on the chart below,
locating them in the quadrant that best reflects their stake and resources.

High Stake/Interest

**Low Resources/
Influence/Power**

**High Resources/
Influence/Power**

Low Stake/Interest
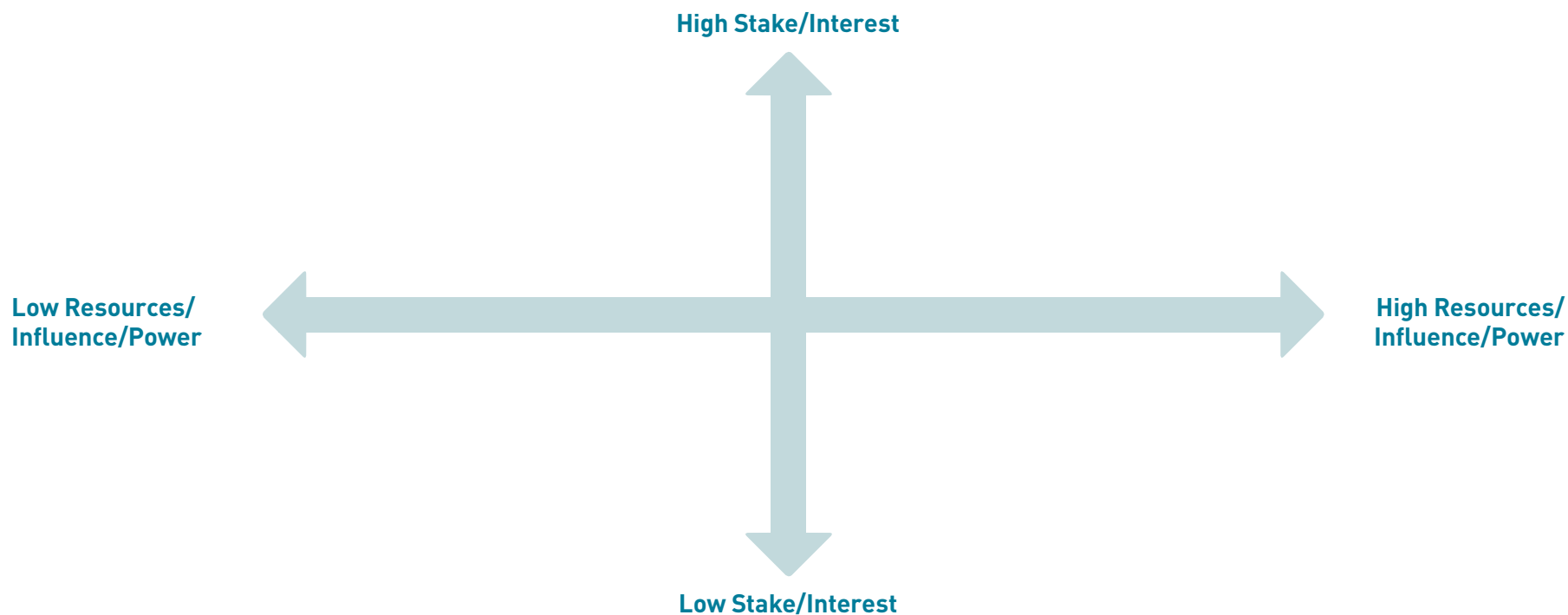
The location of your stakeholders on the chart
suggests the level of engagement appropriate:

High Stake/Low Resources = Consult - Involve
High Stake/High Resources = Collaborate - Empower
Low Stake/Low Resources = Inform - Consult
Low Stake/High Resources = Inform

These are suggestions only and you should think carefully about your stakeholders and their
unique situation before deciding on an appropriate level of engagement.

Be aware that your level of engagement may change rapidly as your project progresses.
This is particularly the case for stakeholders in the Low Stake/High Resources segment as
they can have considerable influence if their interest increases. For example, this group may
include media or funding bodies.

Source: Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2007, Community Engagement Planning: Fundamentals training pack (edition 2).

Engagement Planning Template

Engagement objective:

Section A					Section B				Section C
PROJECT STAGE	**STAKEHOLDER**	**LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT**	**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**	**ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**	**PROPOSED ACTIVITIES**	**DELIVERABLES**	**BUDGET/ RESOURCES**	**RESPONSIBLE/ DUE DATE**	**COMMUNICATION MESSAGE**
Examples					*Examples*				*Examples*
Scoping	Local Government	Collaborate	Establish the scope of the project	Work with stakeholders to establish the scope of the project	Meetings with local government	Scope established	Staff member time	John Son April	We are committed to working with local government
Information gathering	Residents	Involve	Identify residents issues	Ensure that residents views are heard	Focus groups	Issues documented	Facilitator for focus groups	Kerri Perri July	We value your input
	Local Businesses	Involve	Identify local business opportunities and constraints for the project	Ensure local business views are heard	Attend Trader Assoc meeting	SWAT analysis by local business	Catering of evening meal for Traders Assoc Hire of venue	Bobby Boo July	We value local business ideas about opportunities and constraints of the project

Source: Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2005, Book 2: The Engagement Planning Workbook.

Engagement Risk Assessment Template

RISK NO.	DESCRIPTION	OWNER	CONSEQUENCE	LIKELIHOOD	PRIORITY	MITIGATING ACTIVITY
			5 = Catastrophic 4 = Major 3 = Moderate 2 = Minor 1 = Insignificant	5 = Almost certain 4 = Likely 3 = Possible 2 = Unlikely 1 = Rare	Consequence + Likelihood Score 8-10　High Score 7　Significant Score 6　Moderate Score 2-5　Low	
1	No-one comes to workshop	Jane	4	3	**Significant**	Workshop to be promoted extensively in local area

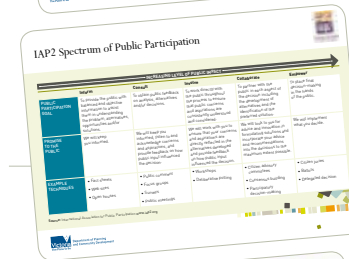**Please note:** Risks of high consequence and low likelihood should be regarded as Significant risks.

For more information on risk management, please see DPCD's *Risk Management Strategy*.

To further support community
and stakeholder engagement,
a series of internal publications
has now been developed:

Community and stakeholder
engagement at DPCD

IAP2 spectrum of
public participation

A guide to planning your community
and stakeholder engagement strategy

Stories of community
and stakeholder engagement

Building community and stakeholder
engagement capabilities

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The Place To Be

**Department of Planning
and Community Development**