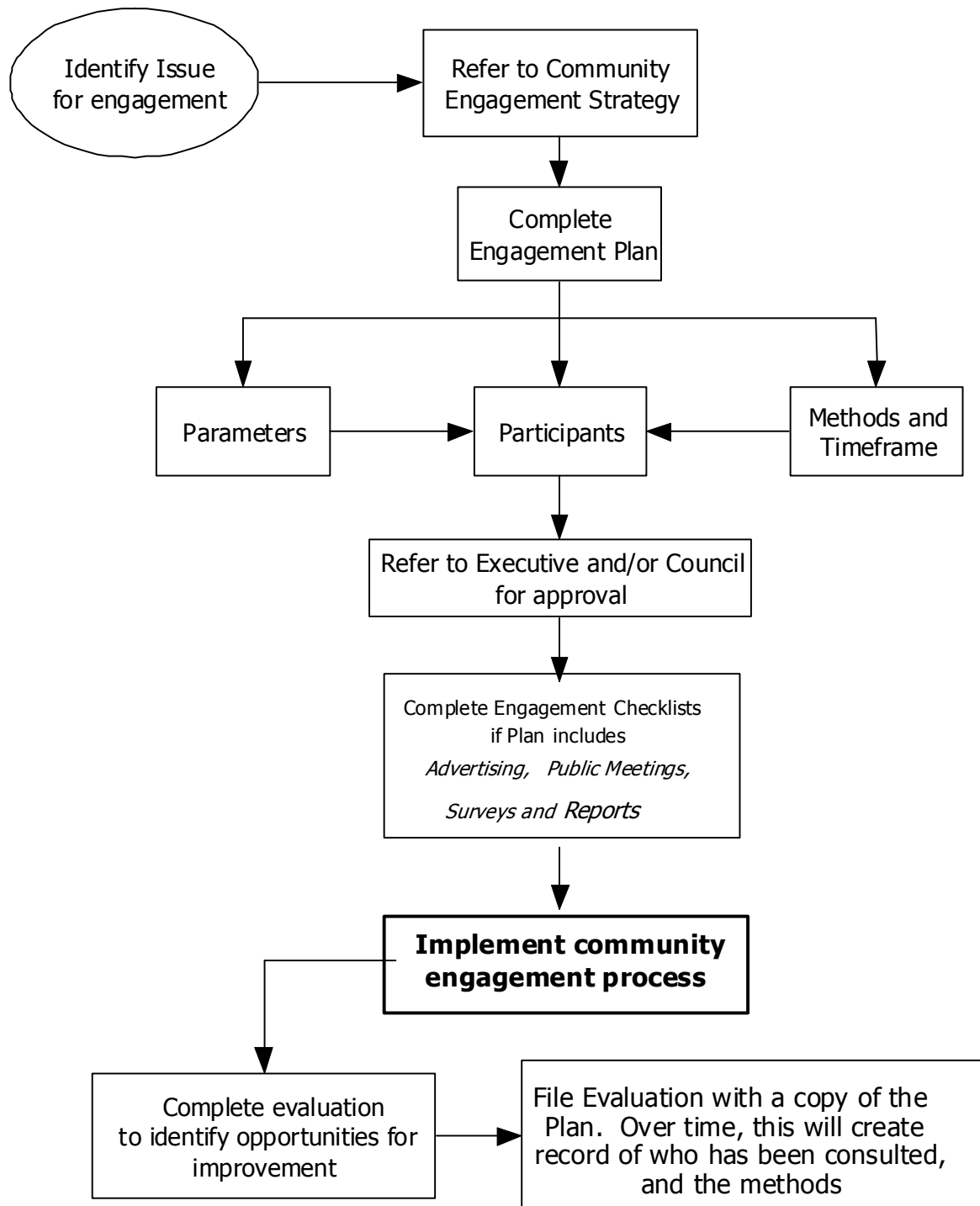# Murrindindi Shire Council
Community Engagement Toolkit

Council is committed to community engagement as a fundamental part of the democratic process, and as a means of facilitating active citizenship. Engagement encourages quality outcomes that reflect the goals and aspirations of the communities we represent.

The ongoing success of our efforts to engage and consult with our communities relies on employing engagement strategies that are consistent, inclusive and effective. Reference to Council's Community Engagement Strategy and the completion of an Engagement Plan will facilitate the development and delivery of high quality engagement processes. A completed Community Engagement Plan is a requirement for anyone undertaking community engagement on behalf of the Murrindindi Shire Council.

Contents

Murrindindi Shire Council
Community Engagement Process

Identify Issue
for engagement

Refer to Community
Engagement Strategy

Complete
Engagement Plan

Parameters

Participants

Methods and
Timeframe

Refer to Executive and/or Council
for approval

Complete Engagement Checklists
if Plan includes

Advertising, Public Meetings,

Surveys and Reports

**Implement community
engagement process**

Complete evaluation
to identify opportunities for
improvement

File Evaluation with a copy of the
Plan. Over time, this will create
record of who has been consulted,
and the methods

1. Determining the parameters of the community engagement process

Describe the issue that people will be consulted about:

Will the issue have an impact on the community? If yes, how?
If yes, a community engagement process should be undertaken.

What is the level of impact of the issue upon the community?

Local or Site Specific ☐

Issues regarding a specific site e.g. improvements to a street or local planning issue such as change in the use of a site.

Neighbourhood ☐

Issues having an impact on a neighbourhood, district or community e.g. development of a neighbourhood park or traffic management plan, re-zoning of an area, applications for gaming licences.

Service Planning and Delivery ☐

Any change, review or impact on a particular service e.g. library or child care services, rubbish collection. This includes Best Value service reviews.

Policy Development ☐

The development of, change to or review of Council policy e.g. an amendment to the Planning Scheme or review of the Animal Management Policy. This may have an impact on the entire Murrindindi community or may be focused on a particular area.

Major Projects and Strategic Plans ☐

Any projects, planning or strategic initiatives that have a major impact on the Murrindindi community, e.g. the Council Plan.

What are the objectives of the community engagement process?
A clear understanding of what is needed from an engagement process helps to keep the process relevant.

Objective	Outcome

What is the scope of the community engagement process?
In undertaking community engagement, there need a clear understanding of what the community is able to influence and what they cannot i.e. what is negotiable and what is not negotiable. This ensures the process is transparent and assists in avoiding misunderstandings with the community about possible outcomes that may be outside the scope of the process.

Negotiable	Non-negotiable
e.g. type of building	e.g. location of building

2. Determining who should be engaged

In order to ensure you are engaging the right individuals and groups, it is important to identify who the stakeholders are for your project.

Appendix 1 and 2 provide some tools to assist in determining which stakeholders need to be part of the community engagement process for your project.

Some groups that should be considered include:
- Communities affected by the project or who have an interest in the outcome
- Other Council Departments
- Councillors
- Other Agencies (government or non-government)

3. Determining how to engage stakeholders

Desired Level of Engagement

Differing levels of engagement need to be employed depending on the issue or program at hand to ensure the process is appropriate to the community's needs. Different levels of impact will also affect which level of engagement is sought.

Murrindindi Shire Council uses the Public Participation Spectrum developed by the International Association for Public Participation as a framework to determine what level of community engagement is required (see table below).

Increasing level of public impact →

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, 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 community	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns 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 direct 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.
When to use	Where the decision has already been made or there is no opportunity for the community to influence the final outcome. This may include: • Legislative responsibilities • Local laws • Information on services or facilities.	Site specific issues, area improvements or service planning, such as: • Development proposals • Access issues • Library services	Service planning, policy development, and major projects such as: • Transport connections • Budget	Strategic plans and major projects such as: • Neighbourhood renewal • Community development • Council Plan	Council elections and community owned projects
Methods that could be used	• Website • Direct mail-outs • Media • Newsletters • Signage	• Focus groups • Interviews with key representatives • Local community meetings • Meetings with key authorities	• Face to face meetings with existing groups • Workshops to seek feedback • Deliberate polling	• Steering committees/ advisory groups • Working groups	• Ballots • Task force groups

Methods of Community Engagement
Choosing a method or a combination of methods to engaging your stakeholders is a critical step in the community engagement planning process. More than one method may need to be used depending on the stakeholder groups being targeted and the stage of the project.

It is important to know what participation and information is required from the stakeholders when you decide to use a specific engagement tool. The following questions should be considered:
- Does the method match the overall program objectives, purpose of engagement and anticipated outcomes?
- Is it inclusive of all stakeholders? If not, what needs to be considered in order to be more inclusive? (see the section below regarding Participation Audit)
- Can the method be adapted to better suit the project and community setting?

A list of useful Community Engagement methods is listed in Appendix 3, along with some guidance regarding when to use them.

Participation Audit
It is also important to consider stakeholder groups considered 'hard-to-reach" and to address barriers to their active participation in the engagement process.

Do the stakeholders of your project include any people belonging to the following groups?

☐ *Older people or people with a disability*
- Consider working with Council's Home Help and Meals on Wheels services and with Carers' Support Groups to facilitate additional publicity and participation.
- Schedule meetings during the day.
- Participants may require assistance with transport.
- Venues must have disabled access.
- Printed material should be appropriate for people with impaired vision.

☐ *Young families, single parent families*
- Consider using local school and kindergarten newsletters and libraries for additional publicity.
- Liaise with Council's Child Care, Family Day Care and Maternal and Child Health services.
- Consider providing childcare or children's activities for meetings.

☐ *People who are unemployed or on a low income*
- May require assistance with transport.

☐ *Youth*
- An innovative 'event based' consultation process is more likely to be successful.
- Consider using local secondary colleges and youth networks for publicity and participation.
- May require assistance with transport.

☐ *Tenants*
- Consider using letterbox drops and local press/schools/community groups for publicity rather than mail addressed to the property owner.

☐ *Absentee Owners*
- Consider using addressed mail in preference to letterbox drops and scheduling meetings for Friday evenings or weekends.

4. Community Engagement Plan

Key Messages
It is important to be aware of the key messages that you wish to convey during your community engagement process. The following questions should be considered:
What do you want to get across to stakeholders involved in the engagement process?
What do you the stakeholders involved in the process want to know?
What could the partners get wrong or misunderstand unless the correct information is emphasized?

After considering the above questions, what messages do you want to get out? (each message should only be one sentence long)

| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

Final Decision
Who is responsible for the final decision? How will the decision be made?

| |
| |

The decision-making process must be clearly communicated to all consultation participants.

Strategic Community Engagement Plan
Complete the following Community Engagement Plan using the information you have put together in the above sections.

Stakeholder	Level of Engagement	Method
e.g. Neighbouring landowners	e.g. Inform	e.g. Mail-out

Depending on the size and complexity of your issue or project, you may also find it useful to complete the Operational Plan located in Appendix 4.

5. Evaluation Planning

Evaluation is an important aspect of the community engagement process. It assists in ensuring that we are continuing to reach the stakeholders we are targeting and allows us to reflect on what can be learned from the process and what we can do better. The Evaluation Plan should consider both the impact of the community engagement method (i.e. the successful delivery of the project or resolution of the issue) and the success of the engagement process itself (e.g. were the stakeholders that were targeted actually engaged).

Key Evaluation Questions	Evidence Source	Suggested Tools to Collect Evidence
e.g. have we engaged the community at the level we promised?	e.g. checking with participants at the Open House	e.g. semi-structured interviews
.e.g which method had the highest response rate	e.g. counting the number of participants	e.g. number of returned questionnaires

A list of sample evaluation questions is provided in Appendix 5.

6. Resources and Budgeting

It is important to ensure that the resources and budget is available to complete the community engagement process successfully. Completing the table below will assist in quantifying the resources required and costs of implementing your Plan.

Method	Resources Required	Associated Cost	$
e.g. Facilitated workshop	Officer time for preparation	Facilitator Materials Venue Hire	500 50 250
e.g. Advertisement in Yea Chronicle	Officer time for preparation	Advertising	200
e.g. Letter to affected landholders	Officer time for mail merging and printing	Printing and postage	200
e.g. Publish via website	Officer time to load	Nil	Nil
		TOTAL	**$1200**

7. Community Engagement Checklist

As an officer responsible for conducting an engagement process on behalf of Council, you have an important opportunity to positively influence the community's perceptions of consultation and engagement. Please complete and sign the checklist and refer this plan to Council's Executive Officer – Communications for Executive Team approval. The plan can be implemented upon approval, or if necessary, any additions or changes can be discussed. At its conclusion, a copy of this plan and the outcome of the evaluation should be lodged with the Executive Officer - Communications.

☐ You have read and understand the Murrindindi Shire Council Community Engagement Strategy

☐ There is a clear, stated understanding about the issue for consultation, and the scope and limitations of the consultation process.

☐ Stakeholders have been identified and strategies to maximize their participation have been incorporated into the plan

☐ The level of impact of the issue and the appropriate methods of engagement have been identified (attach draft copies of advertisements, questionnaires, fliers etc if available)

☐ The decision-making process is clear and will be communicated to participants, along with the outcomes of the engagement process

☐ An Evaluation Plan has been developed and will be used to measure the success of the process and whether objectives have been achieved.

☐ Resources have been identified to fund the engagement process
   (Indicate budget source and/or ledger number) [_____]

Signed: Position:

Name: Date:

This Community Engagement Plan has been developed in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Strategy and has been approved for implementation

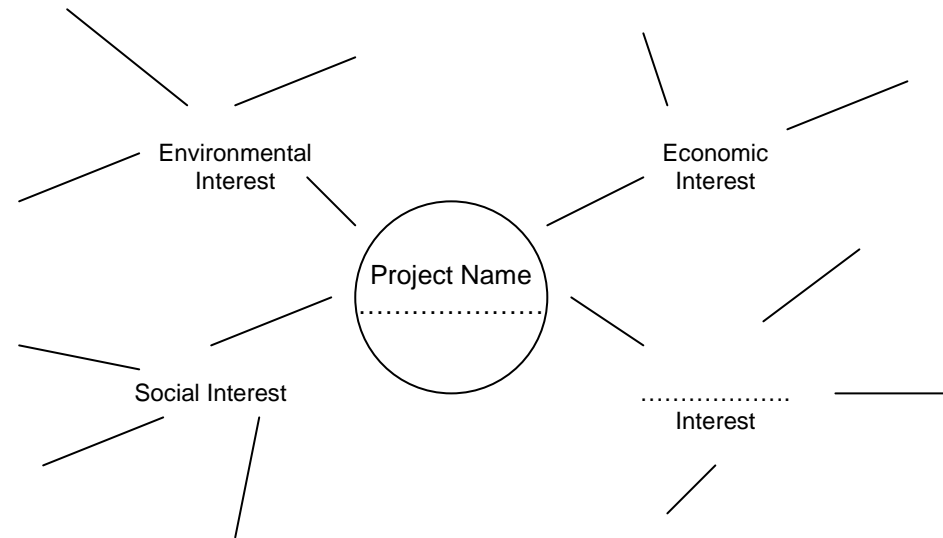Signed: Position:

Name: Date:

Appendix 1 - Mind Map

Map your stakeholders and their relationship to each other and/or their relationship to social, economic or environmental interest.

Environmental
Interest

Economic
Interest

Project Name
....

Social Interest

....
Interest

Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Analysis

1. Rank stakeholders from those with the highest stake in the outcome of the project at the top of the page, to lowest stake in the 'outcome' of the project at the bottom of the project (hint: use sticky notes so you can move them around)
2. Move stakeholders left or right according to the amount of power they have within the decision-making system to determine the outcome of the project.

High Stake – Low Resources
Often marginalised: often require special efforts to engage for sustainable results.

High Stake – High Resources
Have the capacity to implement outputs themselves, keep engaged at a high level. This group do not always see the need to engage with others, especially those without resources.

Low Stake – Low Resources
Not immediately involved, keep track of changing situation.

Low Stake – High Resources
Can redirect their resources elsewhere if lobbied by others. Often don't want to be involved at a high level, but need to be kept informed of what is happening.

Appendix 3 – Community Engagement Methods

Method	Level of Engagement Sought	Level of Impact	Definition
Briefing	INFORM CONSULT	Local or Site Specific Neighbourhood	Briefings are often a way of providing information on a specific issue or initiative to a special audience. The presentation may be delivered by an industry, government or organisation's representative, and is typically followed by detailed discussions in a question-and-answer format. Briefings are useful as a public relations activity when an identified group is going to be affected by a proposal.
Newspaper Advertisement	INFORM CONSULT INVOLVE	Major Project Policy Development Service Delivery Neighbourhood	Newspaper inserts aim to reach and inform the majority of people in a targeted geographic area about an issue or proposal. They create interest, describe the issue being considered and outline opportunities for public involvement in the participation process.
Semi-Structured Interview	CONSULT	Local or Site Specific Neighbourhood	Interviews with key stakeholders with expertise relevant to a particular community issue are lengthy, one to one interviews that may last an hour or two. These are expensive and hard to do well, but they are very good sources of information and are especially useful when it is important to understand the views of certain people.
Kitchen Table Discussions	Any	Local or Site Specific Neighbourhood Service Delivery	A kitchen table discussion group is a small collection of people who get together in someone's home to talk, listen and share ideas on subjects of mutual interest. The host often begins by reminding everyone that there are no right or wrong ideas, and that everyone's contribution is valuable. The host also encourages people to listen, to ask clarifying questions, and to avoid arguing or interrupting.
Speak-Out	Any	Major Project Policy Development Service Delivery Neighbourhood	A speakout is an event where a group of people give testimony about a particular issue. The people speaking can be 'experts' giving factual information to educate the audience and media, or they can be lay people who are personally affected by the issue talking about their lives, or a combination of both.
Public Meeting	INFORM CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE	Major Project Policy Development Service Delivery Neighbourhood	Public meetings provide a good focal point for media interest in an event, and photos can provide a visual indicator or levels of interest and the range of people who attended. Public meetings are often the springboard for a movement or for the establishment of a common-interest group which will continue to act on the issues raised and suggestions made
Sticker Dot Matrix	CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE EMPOWER	Major Project Policy Development Service Delivery	The sticker dot matrix technique allows participants to graphically indicate the important they place on a range of ideas or issues by placing a sticker next to them.
Open House	INFORM CONSULT	Major Project Policy Development	Open houses provide information, a forum for understanding people's concerns and discussing issues, as well as opportunities for follow up or feedback. Usually, the open house includes display information and presentation material

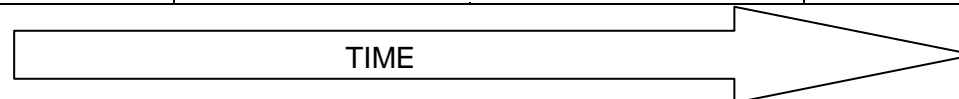|	INVOLVE COLLABORATE	Service Delivery	complimented by printed handout materials and the presence of the sponsor's staff to meet with and answer people's questions one-on-one.
Facilitated Workshop	CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE EMPOWER	Major Project Policy Development Service Delivery Neighbourhood	A structured forum where people are invited to work together in a group (or groups) on a common problem or task. The goals are to resolve issues and build consensus for action, rather than provide information and answer people's questions.
Design Charette	INFORM	Local or Site Specific Neighbourhood Major Project	A team of design experts meets with community groups, developers and neighbours over a period from three-four days to two weeks long, gathering information on the issues that face the community. The team then works together to find design solutions that will result in a clear, detailed, realistic vision for future development.
Focus Groups	CONSULT	Major Project Policy Development	Focus groups are a technique used to find out what issues are of most concern for a community or group when little or no information is available. They allow people to answer questions, but also to bounce ideas off one another, and hence provide more detailed information as people share and elaborate on their issues
Printed Information	INFORM CONSULT	Local or Site Specific Neighbourhood Service Delivery	Printed material is one of the easiest ways to publicise and provide information on a project/issue, or publicise a participation process such as an event or meeting.
Expert Panels	Any	Local or Site Specific Neighbourhood Service Delivery	Expert panels allow community members to hear a variety of informed (expert) viewpoints from which to decide on recommendations or courses of action in relation to an issue or proposal.
Questionnaires	INFORM CONSULT	Major Project Policy Development Service Delivery	Questionnaires are the basic research tool used to collect information, and are usually developed and tested to ensure that they are easily understood and will collect the information required.
Websites	INFORM CONSULT INVOLVE COLLABORATE	Major Project Policy Development Service Delivery Neighbourhood	A website allows community members to obtain information quickly, effectively, and at low cost. Websites provide the chance to inform a wider range of people about issues and to invite the website visitors to become involved in some way.

More information and further examples are available at http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/DSE/wcmn203.nsf/childdocs/-D15064A59E496FC8CA2570360014FEF8-EDE97307C395E0B4CA2570360015B594?open

Example techniques to use within facilitated workshops are described in the 'Totally Engaged' workbook located at X:/Community Consultation/…….

Appendix 4 – Operational Plan

STAGE 1		STAGE 2		STAGE 3	
Gather Information Hear from all stakeholders		**Encourage Dialogue** Enable dialogue between stakeholders with different values		**Make Final Decisions** Provide Opportunities to give feed back and for comment	
Hear from all stakeholder groups. Identify themes and expressions of diverse values. Keep all stakeholders informed of process.		Create planned situations for Involve/Collaborate stakeholders to express their values and listen to others in a safe place. Help identify commonalities and shared outcomes. Sometimes referred to as 'groan zone' or 'think tank'. Develop agreements and shared solutions. Keep all stakeholders informed of process.		Present options and possibilities. Create opportunities for Consult and Involve stakeholders to make final comments. Keep all stakeholders informed of process.	
Stakeholder	**Engagement Method**	**Stakeholder**	**Engagement Method**	**Stakeholder**	**Engagement Method**

Start of engagement process   TIME ⟶   End of engagement process

TASK (suggested only)	MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6	MONTH 7	MONTH 8	MONTH 9
Appoint PRG									
Inform community of project purpose, process & objectives – press/notices/website									
Appoint consultant									
Community engagement via PRG As required after sign off on design									
Community updates – notices/press/website – weekly updates									
Draft Plans & Elevations (funding milestone)									
Community information session to present draft plans for comment									
Revise plans & submit to Council									
Council approval									
Finalise plans									
Preparation of detailed construction drawings and the tender specification									
Obtain building permit									
Tender the project									
Tender evaluation & award									
Commence project construction									

Appendix 5 – Sample Evaluation Questions

- Was the purpose, scope and limitations of the engagement process clear to all participants?

- Was enough time allowed for the community to participate and respond?

- Was the process completed within the timeframe?

- Were the target groups reached?

- Were 'hard to reach' and under-represented stakeholders engaged?

- Were there any unexpected barriers to participation?

- Was the information in an appropriate format and easy to access?

- Was feedback and thanks provided to all participants?

- Were engagement methods implemented according to the plan?

- Did the engagement methods achieve their purpose?

- Was the required response rate achieved?

- Was the budget adequate?

- Were there unexpected expenses?

- Did you (or your staff) have the appropriate skills to conduct the process effectively and inclusively?

- Do the outcomes of this engagement process have the capacity to inform the decision making process?

- Has the process been beneficial for stakeholders?

- What techniques were most effective in conveying technical information?

- Which methods had the highest response rate?