



Ready, Set, **Engage!**

Planning Effective Community Engagement

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Session Overview

1. Why community engagement matters
2. Engagement planning
3. Try it out
4. Discussion and questions
5. Tips for effective engagement

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is a thoughtful and strategic way to develop and sustain relationships between an organization and the communities in which it operates.



Definitions

- **Engagement:** A two-way method of communication that can include listening, discussion, deliberation, and decision-making.
- **Outreach:** Typically, one-way communication that brings services or information to others. Examples of outreach can include mailings, fliers, website posts, presentations, and meetings.
- **Stakeholder:** Individuals, including communities, populations, and their representatives, potentially affected by an organization or its operations who have a local, regional, or national interest in that business or operations.
- **Community:** A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common.
- **Community members:** All who live, learn, work, and play in communities. May also include community leaders.



Why Community Engagement Matters

Engagement helps us:

- Understand community needs and perceptions
- Build trust
- Mitigate opposition
- Advocate effectively

CORE VALUES

IAP2 Federation's Core Values for Public Participation professionals define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. Processes based on the Core Values have been shown to be the most successful and respected.

1 Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

2 Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

3 Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers.

4 Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

5 Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

6 Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

7 Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.



Engagement Planning

- Prevents scope creep
- Helps reach underrepresented groups
- Gets everyone on the same page
- Aligns activities to goals
- Ensures adequate resource allocation
- Creates feedback loops

Ready, Set, Engage!

1. Project

What do we want to engage people about?

3. People

Who will we talk to?

2. Goals

What are the main reasons for engaging the community?

What do we hope to learn?

What outcomes will the community experience?

5. Questions

What will we ask the people we talk to?

6. Key Messages

What information will we share?

4. Level of Engagement

What is the role of the people we will engage?

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

INFORM

Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem.

CONSULT

Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

INVOLVE

Work directly with public to ensure concerns are consistently understood and considered.

COLLABORATE

Partner with the public in each aspect of project development.

EMPOWER

Place the final decision making process in the hands of the public.



1. Project

Examples:

- Plan of Service
- New facility or renovation
- Library operating hours

**What do we
want to engage
people about?**



2. Goals

- Why are we engaging the community?
- What do we want to say?
- What do we want to hear and why?
- What do we hope to learn?
- What will the community get out of this process?



3. People

Who will we talk to?

- Identify the internal and external groups that will be engaged with as part of this project.
- This process is called stakeholder mapping.

Common Public Library Stakeholder Groups

External Groups:

- Municipal Council(s) and Administration(s)
- Specific municipal departments as appropriate, including Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), Culture and Recreation departments
- School divisions and/or specific local schools
- Local community and social service providers and organizations, such as Family Resource Networks, Adult Learning Societies, Boys and Girls' Club, Food Bank, Senior's Centres, etc.
- Museums, heritage sites, and arts and cultural organizations
- Chamber of Commerce and other local business organizations and/or local business owners
- Service clubs such as the Lions, Kinsmen, Rotary, etc.
- Youth Council
- Existing Library users and specific audiences (adults, parents, teens, seniors, etc.)
- Non-users and other residents
- Local media – newspaper, radio station, TV station
- Other elected or appointed officials (MLA, MP, etc.)

Internal Groups:

- Library Board
- Library Staff
- Library Friends' Society
- Volunteers

4. Level of Engagement

What is the role of the people we will engage?

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	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.

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5. Questions



**What will we ask the
people we talk to?**

**Be sure your questions
relate to your
engagement goals!**

Sample Questions for a Plan of Service Process

- What library services and/or programs have had the biggest impact on you personally? To the organizations and/or communities you work with?
- What broader community needs could the library help address? What can the library do to help meet those needs?
- What is something new or different that you would like to see the library do in the next five years?
- Are there things the library should stop doing?
- What are the top three areas for the library to focus on in the coming five years?
- How can the library be more welcoming and more accessible to you?
- Question for staff: What resources do you need?

6. Key messages

What information will we share?

Key messages keep everyone on topic and build confidence about what to say and not say.

**Practice is
important –
know your key
messages.**

7. Activities

What methods will we use to engage people?

Plan activities that are appropriate for the various audiences, participation levels, and information you are looking for.



Examples of Engagement Activities

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Workshops (Community Planning Committee)
- Participate in community events (festivals, farmers markets, trade shows)
- Interviews and one-on-one conversations with key stakeholders (i.e. council members and prospective council members)
- Comment boxes/interactive features in library
- Integrate engagement into programming and check-out desk interactions
- More ideas at [Index of Community Engagement Techniques](#) (Tamarack Institute)



8. Communications

How will we reach the people we want to talk to?

Pay special attention to finding ways to reach underserved groups.

9. Resources

- What do we need to make this happen?
- Think about time, staff, money.

If you don't have the capacity to complete the engagement as planned, reconsider the scope.

10. Timeline

What key dates do we need to plan for?



Milestones in the Engagement Process

- Stakeholder mapping
- Create an engagement plan
- Marketing / Send engagement invitations
- Develop engagement tools (surveys, interview guides, etc.)
- Orientation for staff involved in conducting engagement
- Conduct engagement activities
- Data analysis and draft What We Heard Report
- Distribute report
- Decision-making resulting from engagement



11. Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges might we bump up against?
- How can we mitigate them?
- How can we make engagement more accessible and inclusive?

Example Engagement Challenges

Challenge/Opportunity	Description	Mitigation Strategy/Notes
Last minute cancellations from focus group attendees	Participants unable to attend in-person workshops due to illness or poor weather/road conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Direct stakeholders to completing the survey to provide input.○ Provide 1:1 interviews for key stakeholders who need to reschedule.○ Consider offering virtual session to improve accessibility.
Accessibility issues for online survey	Participants may lack computers or other devices to complete the online survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Paper copies of the survey will be made available.
Previous grievances	Stakeholders may view this as a channel to express any previous concerns or grievances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Listen with empathy.○ Acknowledge previous concerns or issues.○ Redirect to appropriate channel to provide feedback and/or a 1:1 interview.

12. Reporting

- How will we analyze the data?
- How will we share the results?
- What happens to the raw data?

**Keep your
audience in
mind!**

13. Evaluation

How will we know what worked well and what needs to be improved next time?

A quick debrief after an engagement activity will help make the next one better!

Try it out!

Select an engagement opportunity and brainstorm ideas for a draft engagement plan.



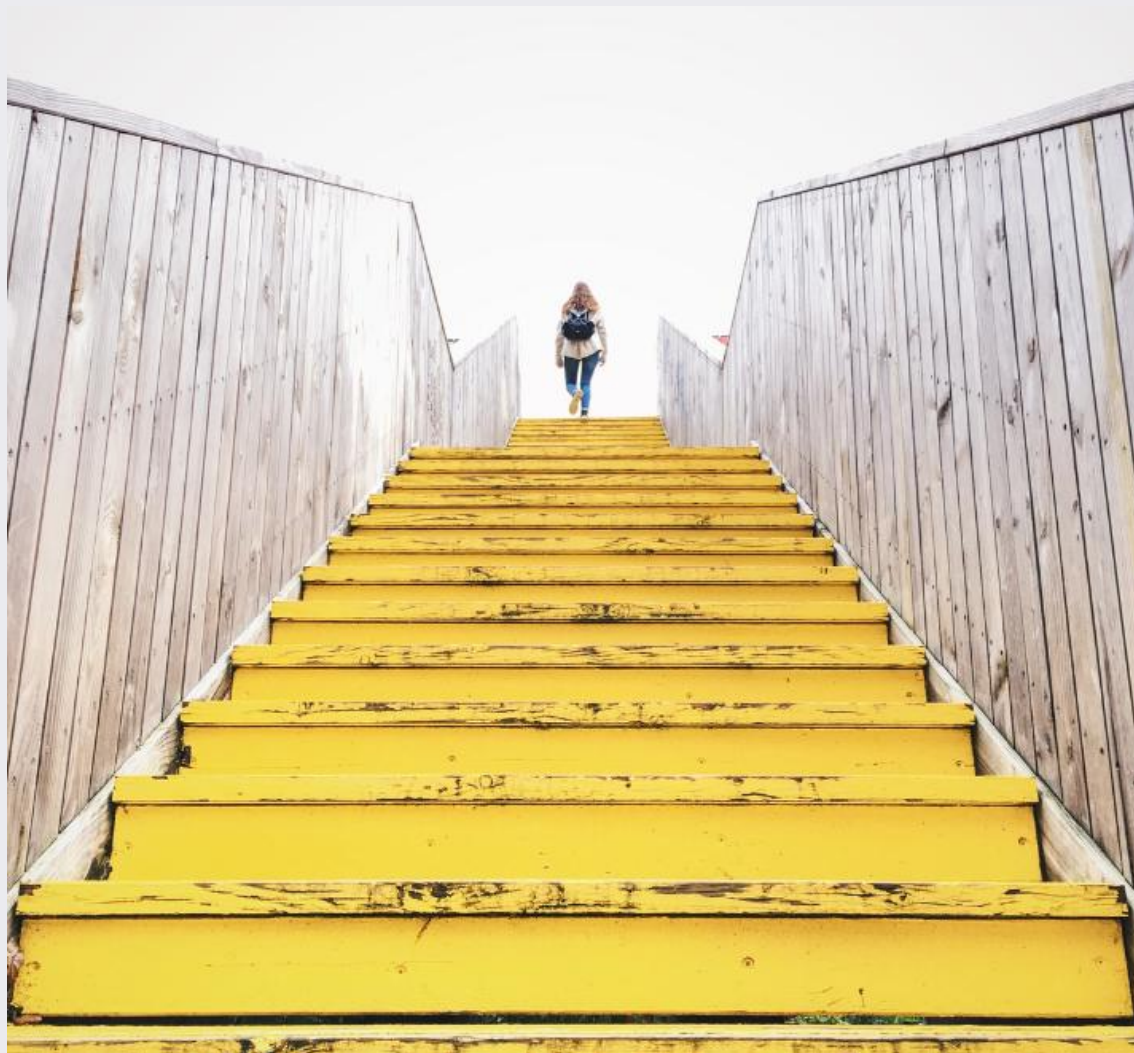


Discussion and Questions



Tips for Effective Engagement

- Focus on listening.
- Listen to understand. Remember: understanding does not mean agreement.
- Stay humble and curious. Show empathy and speak respectfully.
- Paraphrase what you heard by repeating back what you heard in your own words to ensure accuracy.
- Be aware of non-verbal communication.
- Take notes.



Next steps?

Thank you!

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**“Perfect is the
enemy of good”
—Voltaire**