



Engagementworks

Community Engagement Basics

Session 4 – Video 2

Engaging only on the Solution

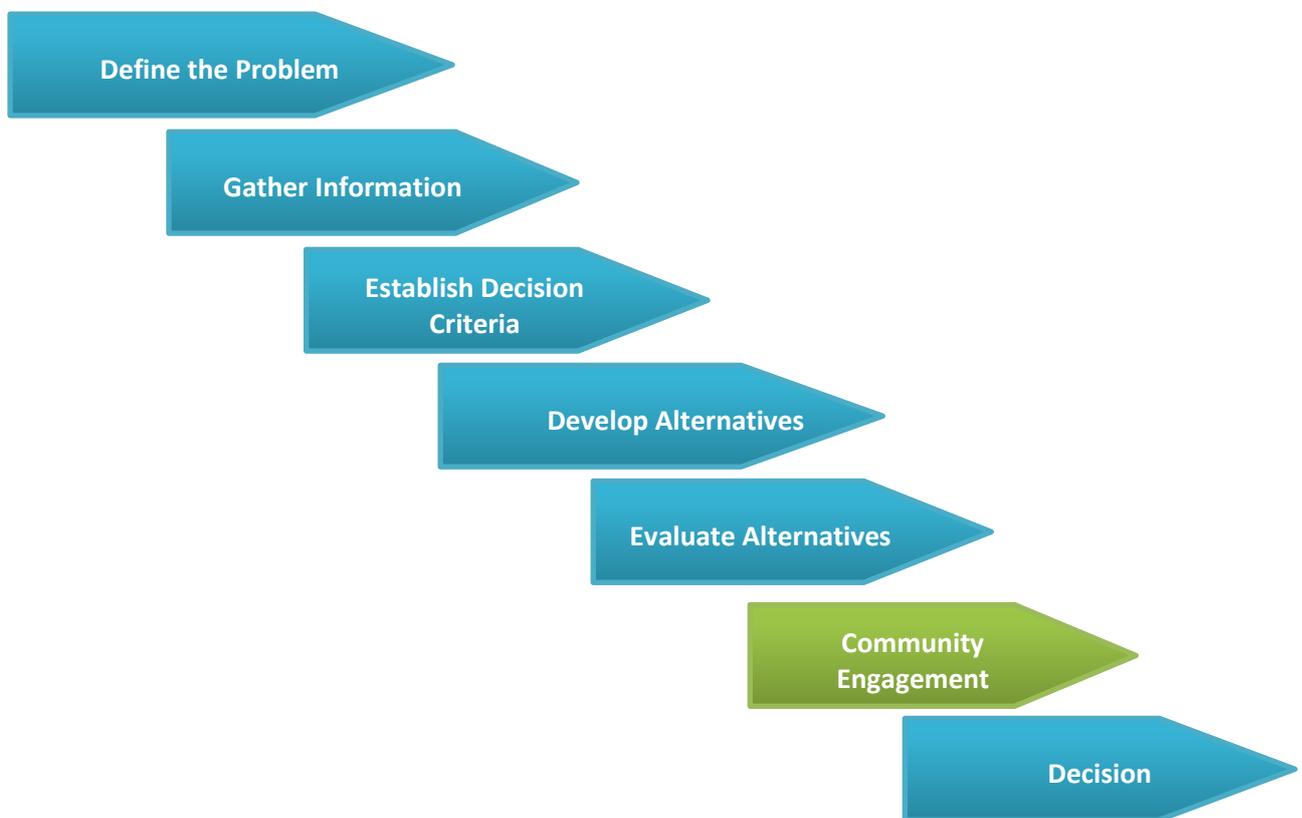
Engaging only on the Solution

Introduction



In this lesson we are going to be talking about an engagement model which is described as being solution focussed and we are going to say why we think this model is no longer relevant in most situations and should be avoided at all costs.

Decide, Announce and Defend Model



Engaging on the solution is often referred to as the Decide, Announce and Defend model of engagement.

It is the way that most community engagement occurs right now and is the prevailing model in many organisations.

The way the model works is that the organisation works pretty much on its own with input from selected “experts” right up until final decision.

The first step you can see here is “defining the Problem”. It probably goes back further than that to actually deciding there is a problem to be addressed.

So, the organisation decides and defines the problem or issue.

It then goes through all of the steps involved in researching the problem, gathering and evaluating information, setting decision criteria, evaluating options and selecting the preferred option.

This means that final decision is imminent, but wait, there is a requirement to consult so let’s do that and then we can confirm our “draft decision’.

Sound familiar?



Why the D-A-D model doesn't work



The problem with this model is that it seeks to engage only on the problem solution.

Defining the problem and all of the steps up to the solution has already been undertaken by the organisation.

If the problem has not been fully defined, which is usually the case with this model, then the solution proposed by the organisation is likely to be flawed and is the usual reason for any ensuing controversy.

People feel excluded, even though they impact on or are impacted by the solution.

They feel as though their views are unimportant and, unless you have really wound them up, they don't engage with you.

I am sure that you may have already experienced this type of reaction.

Relevant here is a statement made by Dr. Vera Tiplett, Chair of the Community Support Organisation in New Orleans at the time of the rebuilding following Hurricane Katrina.

Hurricane Katrina was the deadliest and most destructive Atlantic tropical cyclone of the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season.

It is the costliest natural disaster, as well as one of the five deadliest hurricanes, in the history of the United States.

This is what she said -

“At the end of the day, it’s about letting people who are impacted by something be a part of the decision-making process . . . I mean, if you try to do something for me but without me, it’s really not about me.”

We think that is quite a telling statement, which is why it is included.



Conclusion

This lesson has been a piece of advice about what to avoid when it comes to community engagement rather than what you should be doing.

The Decide, Announce and Defend model for engaging demotivates people and erodes social capital which you need to build if you are to have meaningful conversations with your communities and stakeholders.

