



Engagementworks

Community Engagement Basics

Session 6 – Video 1

**Understanding the environment in
which tools will be used**

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Introduction

In this lesson we will:

- Identify things to consider before choosing tools
- Consider organisational resources available and how those influence tool choices
- Look at some tips to help successful tool use.

Choosing tools is important

- Different communities have different preferences
- Communities remember what you've done before
- Understand what works and what doesn't
- Your organisation's reputation is valuable
- Relationships with communities and stakeholders are important
- Don't over promise and then under deliver



Understand the context of your engagement

- What other relationships does your organisation have with these communities and stakeholders?
- What have they told you previously?
- What are others telling them?
- Do they agree that there is a problem that needs fixing?
- How important to them is this problem?
- How will different communities be affected?
- Whereabouts on the engagement spectrum should this engagement be?

Communication is a sub-set of engagement

Communication is important

It needs to be:

- Consistent
- Timely
- Relevant
- Easily understood

Communication needs to support an engagement strategy

It needs to be:

- Mindful of critical dates and decisions
- Sensitive to community concerns, needs and aspirations
- Non-judgemental
- Transparent and able to reflect a communities ideals



The engagement spectrum affects toolbox choices

Engagement is a process that can involve one or any combination of the OECD's **three levels of engagement**:

- Information
- Consultation
- Active participation



Organisational resources affect toolbox choices

Available organisational resources also shape toolbox choices, as well as identifying where on the engagement spectrum the engagement project sits.

There are three categories of organisational resources:

- Time
- People
- Money



Organisational time

- Engagement principles say that engagement should start early but this isn't always the case
- Limited time resources will create risks that need to be managed
- Community expectations not being met and related outrage are the greatest risks
- Where lack of time is a risk, reliance will be needed on communication tools more than engagement tools



Organisational people

All levels of an organisation should be included in an engagement plan

- Elected members/Directors
- Senior management
- Operational teams
- Engagement practitioners



Each group has a different role and will require differing levels of competence with chosen tools
Consistency of approach and messaging is vital.

Organisational money

Tool choices should be assessed for their related costs

- Some have purchase or rental costs
- Some have implementational costs (e.g. venue hire)
- All have administrative costs (e.g. staff time)
- Some costs may be able to be offset against other project costs.



There are no “perfect” tools

- All tools have strengths and weaknesses
- A tool that works well for one community may not work for others
- This is why a selection of tools is important: that way strengths and weaknesses can be planned to overlap.



Tool choices

Choosing the right tool or mix of tools depends on a number of things, including:

- the issue
- legislative and regulatory requirements
- the objectives of the exercise
- political sensitivities
- Stakeholder preferences
- whether a decision has already been made or not
- the negotiables and non-negotiables (choices and options available)
- available resources.



11 tips for successful tool use

1. Take engagement seriously
2. Start from the public’s perspective
3. Deliver what is promised
4. Watch the timing
5. Be creative
6. Balance different interests
7. Be prepared for criticism
8. Involve employees
9. Develop a coherent policy
10. Act now
11. Follow up.



In summary

In this lesson we have:

- Identified things to consider before choosing tools
- Considered organisational resources available and how those influence tool choices
- Looked at some tips to help successful tool use.