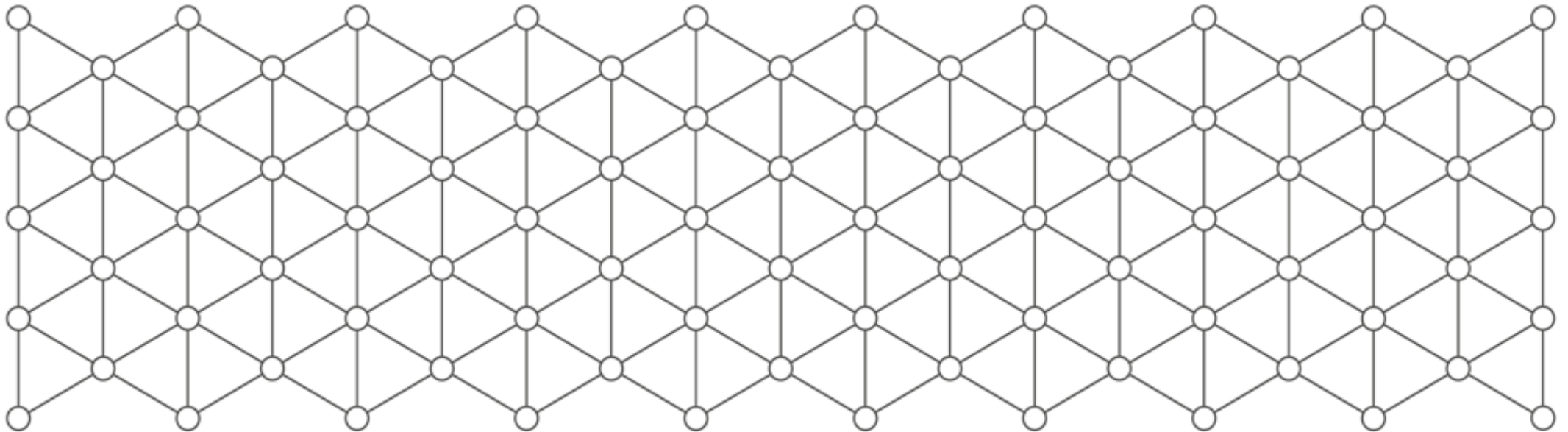# Selecting Methods for Community Engagement

Resources for choosing the right engagement methods to support good community engagement planning at each level of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

New Zealand Government

A suite of resources supporting Community Engagement

Selecting Methods for Community Engagement is one of six new community engagement resources for policy advisors and government agencies within the Policy Project's Policy Methods Toolbox. These were developed by the Policy Project to fulfil Commitment 5 of the Open Government Partnership 2018 – 2021 National Action Plan. Commitment 5 aims to assist the New Zealand public sector to develop a deeper and more consistent understanding of what good engagement with the public means (right across the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation).

The six new community engagement resources are:

1. **Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement** – A guide for policy advisors on good community engagement practice, including at each level of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.

2. **Principles and Values for Community Engagement** – A guide for government agencies and policy advisors on principles and values for good community engagement in policy making.

3. **Getting Ready for Community Engagement** – A guide for government agencies on building capability and readiness for community engagement.

4. **Community Engagement Design Tool** – A tool to help policy advisors identify the level on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation most appropriate for a specific policy project.

5. **Selecting Methods for Community Engagement** – Resources to help policy advisors choose the right engagement methods to support good engagement planning.

6. **Guide to Inclusive Community Engagement** – A guide for government agencies and policy advisors on inclusive community engagement in policy making.

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Publication details

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

1.1 Two resources for selecting engagement methods

Policy advisors leading work on the community engagement elements of a specific policy project often face the significant challenge of deciding which of the many available engagement methods to adopt. This guide to selecting community engagement methods provides two resources to support this process:

- The International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2's) Methods Matrix.
- Profiles of six method examples across IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation (the Spectrum).

1.2 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation and Methods Matrix

More recently, IAP2 Australasia have produced a Methods Matrix for selecting community engagement methods. This resource recognises that the methods appropriate for engagement on a given policy issue or opportunity vary depending on the Spectrum level of influence on decision making involved – for the community as a whole, and of specific groups within it. They can also depend on the characteristics of the engagement context, purpose, and scale.

The Methods Matrix resource – which is incorporated in section two of this guide – offers a menu of methods that can be used for community engagement as part of a policy project, and advice on how to use it to select those most appropriate to your policy project. Ideally, it would be used after applying the Community Engagement Design Tool (a companion to this engagement resource), to identify the level or levels of influence on the Spectrum most appropriate for your project.

1.3 Profiles of six engagement methods

The six community engagement methods profiled in section three of this guide are being increasingly used internationally where engagement is at levels on the Spectrum above Inform. They are focus groups, crowd sourcing, deliberative forums, co-design, open space technology and participatory budgeting.

The profiles identify the purpose of each method, provide an overview and process description, the spectrum level, number of people and resources/costs associated with their use. If you identify one or more of the profiled methods as potentially appropriate for your community engagement when you use the Methods Matrix, the methods profiles resource will give you more information to help you decide whether or not to adopt those particular methods.

2. How to use the IAP2 Methods Matrix

The Methods Matrix is a tool for selecting methods to match your community engagement needs.

Undertake the matrix analysis with colleagues and partners to help choose the best set of methods. As mentioned above, it's ideal to first apply the Design Tool to help you determine the participatory approach for your engagement on the Spectrum.

2.1 Five steps to use the Matrix

1. Identify and highlight which of the sub-categories within each of the following four main selection categories across the top of the Matrix are most relevant to your policy project:

    A. IAP2 Spectrum level
    B. engagement context
    C. engagement purpose
    D. scale of engagement

    Note: If you have used the Design Tool to help identify the key design elements of your project, you can use your analysis to help you identify which of the selection sub-categories apply.

2. Work your way down the methods column, identifying methods that are rated as suitable to all or most of the sub-categories you have highlighted – that is, they have a dot in the column for the sub-categories you selected at step 1. The methods you've identified constitute the long list of methods options for your project.

3. Review the long list to create a short list of methods that could be appropriately used. The short list will be created by determining:

    a. the likely effectiveness of each method in gathering the output sought from the engagement

    b. the likely effectiveness of the method in creating the desired set of relationships and experience for participants in the engagement

    c. the preferences and needs of the people to be engaged, and finally

    d. the capacity and capability of your organisation to undertake the engagement using this method.

4. The final step in shortlisting methods for the project is to check if there are additional methods needed to engage a more diverse set of perspectives.

5. Select your preferred methods for engagement based on which methods you consider will best meet the criteria in 3 above.

Tip: Don't just do retail therapy!

Don't use the Methods Matrix like a retail menu – use the Community Engagement Design Tool to do the analysis that identifies which of the specific sub-categories along the top of the Matrix apply to your project.

2.2 The IAP2 Methods Matrix

Column groups: **SPECTRUM** (Inform–Empower) · **ENGAGEMENT CONTEXT** (Low trust–Need to understand community better) · **ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE** (Share information–Innovation) · **SCALE** (Individual–Public)

METHOD	DESCRIPTION	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Low trust	Low interest	High complexity	Tight timeframes	Need new solutions	Hard to reach audiences	Highly political	High emotion or outrage	Need to understand community better	Share information	Legal compliance	Understand reactions, implications, consequences of proposition	Generate alternatives	Improve quality of policy, strategy, plans	Relationship development	Community capacity & capability building	Generate support for action	Behaviour change	Social licence	Community adaptive capacity	Identify problems / opportunities to address	Make decisions	Innovation	Individual	Small group	Large group	Public
35 shuffle	A group activity to identify and then prioritise issues, concerns or ideas. Individuals develop issues, concerns or ideas which are then circulated five times and ranked on a scale of 1 to 7 to prioritise.	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓				✓			✓	✓					✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	
Action research	Research involving a community of practice trying to solve a problem through action. Communities act as 'co-researchers'.		✓	✓	✓				✓		✓				✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	
Advertising	Advertisements paid for in print, broadcast or online mediums. Can be used to promote projects, engagement activities or to meet legal obligations.	✓					✓	✓								✓	✓						✓										✓
Appreciative inquiry	A structured process for decision making that focuses on building on strengths (what works well), rather than focusing on problems and limitations. In AI Summits, participants follow a four-stage process of Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny.			✓	✓				✓		✓			✓					✓		✓	✓					✓				✓	✓	
Blogs	An online series of posts about an engagement project or issues, which the community can share and comment on.	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓		✓								✓
Briefings	Presentations and discussions with community or stakeholder groups. Can vary widely from informing to gathering feedback, ideas or options.	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓			✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	
Card storming	Participants individually write their ideas, concerns, issues on cards. These are shared in small groups then categorised by the whole group.		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓					✓			✓	✓	✓					✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
Citizens jury	A representative sample of citizens are randomly selected to form a citizen's jury which deliberates on a problem or opportunity. The jury hears evidence from witnesses, in front of a public gallery, before adjourning to deliberate and make a recommendation or decision.			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓					✓	✓		✓						✓	✓			✓		
Citizens panel	Large numbers of people who are selected to be representative of the population and be a part of a panel that deliberates on a range of issues over a set period of time. Surveys are distributed during the time to understand community attitudes, feedback, issues and behaviour. Can track changes as well.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	✓			✓				✓	
Co-design	Consumers and users work with designers to codesign products, services or processes.		✓	✓						✓					✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓
Collaborative Governance	A structured decision-making process where agencies and stakeholders work collaboratively to make a decision or recommendation. Key features include collaboratively defining the problems, process and decisions through consensus.			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Community education program	A program to educate the community about a topic, project or proposition. Education campaigns can be designed to raise awareness, generate understanding or support behaviour change.	✓														✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓
Community reference / Advisory / Liaison groups	A structured group of community or stakeholder representatives that meet regularly and operate under a Terms of Reference. Can vary from members providing their own feedback or ideas, to members acting as a conduit between the broader community and organisation.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		
Community visioning	An exploratory, facilitated group method where participants are asked to close their eyes and visualise what their community looks like now and in the future. Uses visualisation and dialogue and may be extended to include creative arts activities.		✓	✓	✓						✓				✓				✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	

METHOD	DESCRIPTION	SPECTRUM					ENGAGEMENT CONTEXT									ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE														SCALE			
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower	Low trust	Low interest	High complexity	Tight timeframes	Need new solutions	Hard to reach audiences	Highly political	High emotion or outrage	Need to understand community better	Share information	Legal compliance	Understand reactions, implications, consequences of proposition	Generate alternatives	Improve quality of policy, strategy, plans	Relationship development	Community capacity & capability building	Generate support for action	Behaviour change	Social licence	Community adaptive capacity	Identify problems / opportunities to address	Make decisions	Innovation	Individual	Small group	Large group	Public
Consensus conference	A highly-structured method involving a representative jury or panel of non-expert citizens who deliberate during a chaired public hearing held over two to four days where they hear evidence from a range of different experts. Jury members decide who to call in as expert witnesses. Participants make recommendations or decisions.				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓		
Conversation cafes	Open, hosted conversations set in cafes or other places where community members would ordinarily gather.		✓	✓	✓							✓	✓		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		
Conversation circle	A leaderless meeting where participants take a seat in a central circle to discuss a topic or question that's controversial. Those watching follow a structured process to enter into the circle of discussion. Designed to voice multiple perspectives.		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓						✓				✓		✓	✓					✓	✓			✓		
Crowd sourcing	Gathering ideas, services and content, from online users, rather than from staff or suppliers. Crowdsourcing can including asking for solutions to a problem, seeking funding for a project such as a start-up (crowdfunding) developing creative content or graphics, or to gather information. Can include a competition or incentive.	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓	✓			✓					✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓				✓
Deliberative democracy processes	Deliberative democracy processes are methods where a representative sample of the population, usually chosen through random selection, meet and deliberate over a few days. Participants are members of the wider population rather than representatives of stakeholder groups. Groups aim to make a decision, make a recommendation or find common ground. Includes a range of processes such as citizens juries, and consensus conferences.				✓	✓			✓		✓		✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓
Deliberative forum	A forum where a representative sample of the community deliberates on a topic, issue or proposal. Forums last at least two days.		✓	✓					✓		✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓						✓		✓			✓	
Deliberative polling	A structured process where randomly-selected participants explore and deliberate on a topic at a meeting over two to three days and then their opinions are polled. Results of the poll are shared with the group and publicly. Can include a pre-poll, as well as additional polling that occurs after the engagement activity.		✓	✓							✓									✓			✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Delphi processes	Structured process where a panel of experts answer a series of questionnaires (at least two rounds). After each survey, a feedback report and a new survey is circulated. Designed to seek consensus on a complex problem.		✓		✓				✓		✓				✓					✓	✓			✓	✓					✓	✓		
Design charrette	Used for planning local areas, a design charette is a multi-disciplinary design workshop held over three to four days, involving stakeholders, the project team, planning and design professionals, technical experts and sometimes community members. Participants walk in small groups, each containing a technical expert, to develop constraints, opportunities and solutions.			✓	✓										✓					✓	✓						✓				✓		
Dialogue	A form of discussion where participants agree to suspend judgments to fully explore a question and seek shared meaning. Participants are asked to reflect on what the group is saying and what they are individually feeling.						✓								✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Door knocking	Community engagement or project teams go door-to-door to liaise with affected residents.	✓	✓				✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓							✓			
Fairs and festivals	A fair or festival involving food and entertainment, as well as activities around an engagement topic, project or proposal. Designed to make engagement topic more appealing and to reach audiences who would not normally attend workshops.	✓	✓	✓					✓			✓			✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓						✓
Fishbowl methods	Deliberation and decision making is undertaken by decision makers in view of the public, such as in a public gallery or by video streaming, to enhance transparency and accountability.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓						✓	✓				✓			✓					✓

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		SPECTRUM					**ENGAGEMENT CONTEXT**									**ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE**														**SCALE**			
Focus group	A small group discussion hosted by a facilitator about a focussed topic. Designed to allow for an open discussion that is guided by a series of questions, but which may follow the flow of participants' discussions.		✓	✓	✓										✓	✓		✓	✓								✓		✓		✓		
Focused conversation	A structured process to host a conversation with community or stakeholder representatives. Includes a series of questions that are objective, then reflective, interpretive and decisional.		✓	✓	✓						✓				✓			✓			✓						✓		✓	✓	✓		
Future search conference	A future planning process where participants undertake a series of sessions on the past, present, future, common ground, and action planning. Designed to develop a shared vision for the future.		✓	✓	✓				✓		✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓		✓		✓		✓		
Gamification	Development of online or non-digital games which participants play to solve problems and accomplish tasks. Can sometimes include rewards for players. For engagement, can be used to learn, explore a scenario, understand implications of choices, or to understand the perspectives of different people. Participants can sometimes take on the role of different characters, including decision makers.	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	✓				✓			✓					✓					✓				✓
Graphic recording	Capturing participants ideas, expressions and discussions in real-time during an engagement activity, to create a visual representation of the discussions.		✓	✓	✓			✓										✓									✓		✓		✓	✓	
Hotline – telephone / web	Widely publicised telephone or email hotline that provides one-to-one responses to community questions or complaints.	✓	✓									✓		✓		✓	✓						✓		✓		✓						✓
Interactive mobile apps	Interactive computer application designed for smartphones, mobile devices and computer tablets. Developed to meet project purposes and to reach community and stakeholders through smart phone technology at a place and a time that suits the community person.	✓	✓	✓				✓				✓				✓		✓					✓	✓		✓	✓						✓
Hui	A gathering, congregation, assembly, meeting that is focused on a particular purpose or topic. While hui is a traditional Māori meeting structure, the meeting can include anyone. In hui the key meeting processes include: ✓ opening with karakia ✓ whakawhanaungatanga, connecting to one another and the kaupapa ✓ hui structures to enable storytelling, deliberations and conversation ✓ hosting including kai and resources.		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓				✓	✓							✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	
Interactive online tools	Interactive computer application designed for smartphones, mobile devices and computer tablets. Developed to meet project purposes and to reach community and stakeholders through smart phone technology at a place and a time that suits the community person.	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓					✓
Interviews	One-on-one discussions to explore and understand community or stakeholder needs, perspectives, insights and feedback, and to build relationships.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓							✓	✓		✓			✓		✓				✓			✓			
Letters	Individualised letters sent to affected or interested community members and stakeholders. Can be a legal requirement.	✓	✓				✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	✓						✓							✓			
Media stories	Media releases, pitches or briefings provided to journalists to publish free editorial on engagement projects or issues. A method to reach a broader audience and the engage the public. Media can be print, broadcast or online.	✓					✓	✓					✓			✓								✓	✓	✓							✓
Newsletters	Can be designed to inform, seek feedback, to gather ideas, and to update the community on the engagement project and how community input / feedback has been taken into consideration. Can include feedback mechanisms.	✓	✓	✓												✓														✓	✓	✓	✓
Online discussion forum	Online forum where invited or self-selected participants contribute to an online discussion about a topic or project for a set period of time. Participants can contribute anonymously, using an avatar or using their true identities.		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓	✓	✓		✓

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		SPECTRUM					ENGAGEMENT CONTEXT									ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE														SCALE			
Open house	A public information session incorporating a series of displays or stations staffed by technical experts, engagement professionals or the project team. More informal than public meetings. Can incorporate presentations, tours, interactive displays, and gathering spaces.	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓						✓		✓	✓		✓						✓						✓
Open space	A method for hosting a meeting, conference or summit which is focused on a particular purpose or topic, but which has no formal agenda set. In the 'self-organising' process, participants determine the topics of breakout sessions at the start. Ranges in size from a few to thousands. Participants set the agenda, rather than organisers.		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓				
Opt-in e-panel	Community members opt in to be part of an online engagement panel. Panel members can be called on to participate in engagement projects or questions. Can range from seeking insight, input, feedback or voting. Differs from a citizen panel in that members self-select.		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓				✓
Participatory budgeting	Process where the community works with an organisation through its budgeting process. Can range from setting a whole-of-organisation budget, divisional or project budgets. Participants should be a representative sample of the community.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓					✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Participatory editing	Citizens edit and shape documents and reports through a series of circulating documents.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓									✓		✓			✓								✓	✓	✓
Photo visioning / Photo voice / Photo journals	Community members gather and share photos that represent their ideas or preferences for the future. Can be incorporated into face-to-face engagement events, or collected and shared online. GIS platforms can be integrated.											✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓								✓	✓			✓		
Public displays	Staffed or unstaffed displays of information, options, drafts or final decisions which are made available in a public place.	✓	✓					✓				✓				✓	✓	✓					✓										✓
Public meeting	A meeting organised by either the organisation or community with presentations and questions asked by the crowd.						✓			✓					✓	✓		✓			✓				✓						✓	✓	✓
Randomly–selected e-panel	Similar to an opt-in e-panel except members are randomly-selected to avoid bias. Ideally panels should be a representative sample of the community.		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓					✓	✓				✓
Social media – Facebook	Most commonly used social networking site where you can post comments, photos and videos, which can be seen and shared by either friends or the public. Use to reach a broader audience, have online discussions, and monitor and respond to community ideas or concerns.	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓			✓	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓		✓						✓
Social media – LinkedIn	Social networking site based on users' professional expertise. Users can participate in discussion groups around areas of common interest. Can reach and engage communities of professional interest.	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Social media – photo and video sharing	Photo-sharing and video-sharing social media services such as YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest. Community groups, organisations and individuals can upload photos and videos on a public domain and make comments. Can be used to educate the community, share ideas, capture history, future visioning or to change behaviour.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓		✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓
Social media – Twitter	Microblogging platform. Users tweet a message of a maximum of 140 characters to their followers. Messages can be retweeted by others which makes the original message viewed by their own followers. Described as a 'social broadcasting media' it can act like a news alert system.	✓	✓				✓	✓				✓				✓		✓															✓
Storytelling	Storytelling is a tool for encouraging participants to share stories from their personal experience or knowledge that help you explore an issue and how people are affected by it. You can also ask them to develop stories about how possible solutions might impact on them.			✓	✓		✓							✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓		

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		SPECTRUM					**ENGAGEMENT CONTEXT**									**ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE**														**SCALE**			
Study circles	Small groups of people (usually between 5 and 20) who meet multiple times to explore an issue. Study circles may be led by an organisation or by community members, and may exist to share knowledge, generate ideas, gather feedback and build community relationships.		✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			✓			✓	✓				✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Submissions	Formal written submissions which must be made in line with government regulations.		✓							✓							✓	✓												✓	✓	✓	
Summit	A large-scale two to three day event where a large number of diverse people come together to consider information, engage in dialogue, participate in interactive activities and make recommendations.		✓	✓	✓				✓		✓		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓				✓	
Surveys	A series of questions provided to a sample which may be a representative sample or a self-selected sample.		✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			✓			✓	✓				✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Tours	Community and stakeholders are invited to tour a site to gain a deeper understanding or to gain first-hand experience. Can be designed to foster relationships, raise awareness, increase awareness, educate, gain new insights or to change perspectives.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓							✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Voting	Voting on a series of options. Need to be clear about the voting procedures; any criteria (e.g. weighted criteria); whether the results of the vote will form a decision, recommendation or insight; and provide enough information to enable informed voting.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓				✓												✓	✓	✓	✓
Wānanga	A gathering to discuss, learn and or deliberate and consider issues, problems or opportunities. Wānanga ipurangi is an online forum. Whether it is run kanohi ki te kanohi (in person) or online, wānanga follow the iwi Māori protocols for meetings.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓	
Webinars	Online interactive web-based seminar, presentation or workshop. Webinars can include a wide range of features such as live video streaming, live navigating through websites, voting, commenting or Q&As.	✓						✓				✓				✓														✓	✓		
Websites	Can include dedicated websites for an engagement project, a central hub for all of an organisation's engagement activities, or a specific page on an organisation's corporate website. Vary widely from being static websites to highly interactive where the community can comment, upload their own content, or jointly create.	✓	✓	✓					✓			✓				✓							✓	✓									✓
Wikis	A website where content is not owned by a specific person or organisation, but is created, deleted or modified by members of the public.			✓	✓	✓	✓					✓			✓					✓							✓		✓				✓
Workshop	A structured method to explore specific, complex issues, and where participants work in small groups.		✓	✓	✓				✓						✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓		✓		✓	✓	
World cafe	A structured process where participants discuss a question or series of questions at a group of small tables. Each table has a host who facilitates the same conversation during a series of 'rounds'. At the end of each round, participants disperse and move to new tables to continue the discussion. Is designed so participants share ideas, concerns, fears, experiences or feedback with a broad range of people.		✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	

Source: IAP2 Australasia

3. Six engagement methods

The six community engagement methods profiled below are increasingly used internationally. They all involve the community having more influence on policy making than at the Inform level on the Spectrum of Public Participation. They are:

1. Focus groups

2. Crowdsourcing

3. Deliberative forums

4. Co-design

5. Open space technology

6. Participatory budgeting.

Where these methods can sit on the Spectrum is summarised in Figure 1. The determining factor in positioning the methods across the Spectrum is the level of decision-making influence of engagement participants. The same method can be associated with different Spectrum levels as Figure 1 indicates. For example, Open Space Technology can be used as a Collaborative method or as a method simply to Involve people. The difference is the level of decision-making influence afforded to the participants on the policy issue concerned.

Figure 1: The six engagement methods placed on the Spectrum
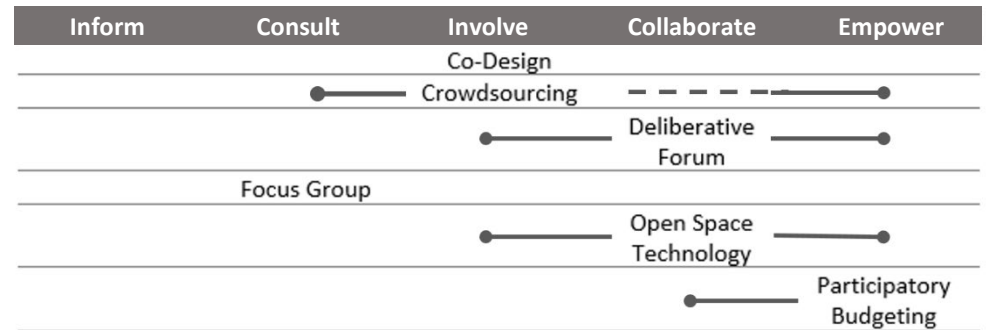
For each method the profiles below highlight the following:

- Purpose of the method

- Overview and description

- IAP2 Spectrum level it's suitable for

- When to use the method

- Number of people the method is suitable for

- Resources and costs involved

- Creator or Developer, where known.

Method 1: Focus groups

Purpose

Focus groups obtain participant opinions and feedback on a topic or question. The method has traditionally been used in market research, and is also used in policy making and other public engagement initiatives.

Overview

A focus group aims to provide insight into the group's views on a topic. Ideally, a focus group should provide the research or decision maker with a detailed idea of the concerns of a given community. They may be useful at different stages of policy development. Early on they can provide an insight into the kinds of issues and values that are of concern. Later on, they may be used to garner views on a proposed policy.

Process description

Participant selection will vary and may involve:

- targeting a specific demographic from which participants can be invited
- random selection
- a 'representative' sample.

A focus group is led by a moderator or facilitator who asks the group to respond to some combination of open and closed questions. It's generally held over a period of one to four hours. The detailed process will vary and be designed for the specific output being sought.

The proceedings are recorded.

There is no need for participants to reach a collective decision, consensus, or even agreement on the topic discussed – this is simply not the aim of a focus group.

Spectrum level

Consult

When to use

Focus groups are best used to seek feedback on the specific proposals, trade-offs, needs, preferences and consequences of proposals. Focus groups are best used alongside other engagement methods.

Number of people

5 to 10 people.

Resources/costs

The resources required are:

- venue and hosting costs
- facilitator
- facilitation resources
- background information.

Creator/Developer

Krueger, R. A. (2002). Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews. www.eiu.edu/ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf

Method 2: Crowdsourcing

Purpose

Crowdsourcing attracts and harnesses a large number of people in providing input, analysis, or decision making in the policy-making process.

Overview

Crowdsourcing establishes channels, mostly online, through which citizens can share their ideas and opinions. Crowdsourcing covers a range of models including:

- collective intelligence or crowd wisdom
- crowd creation
- crowd voting
- crowd funding.

In community engagement projects, the first three methods are usually the approaches used.

Process description

The success of crowdsourcing depends on attracting and generating participation. Important features of crowdsourcing include that fact that it's an open call for help, its clear problem definition, and the 'bite-sized' options it provides for how to participate.

To attract and retain significant participation, facilitate user contributions in a created space that has a framework and basic guidelines, while remaining as open as possible in order to receive diverse submissions.

Crowd sourcing also requires:

- a user-friendly participation platform
- a transparent process for analysing citizen input and feeding it into the work of government.

Spectrum level

Consult / Involve / Empower

When to use

Crowd sourcing is most successful when associated with a problem or opportunity that has significant public or community interest. The problem may be applied early in the policy process to collect people's views and experiences, or later in the policy process to analyse options or shape the final decision.

Number of people

Successful crowdsourcing requires a crowd. The optimum user base is around five thousand people.

Resources/costs

Successful crowdsourcing requires:

- significant attraction and recruitment
- an online platform
- engagement facilitation
- effective communication of outputs.

Method 3: Deliberative Forum

Purpose

Deliberative forums create a space for affected parties to discuss an issue or problem in a constructive manner. The naming and framing of the issue must be done in such a way as to prompt thoughtful consideration and discussion. The narrowing of the issue to a specific concern allows participants to weigh the pros and cons associated with practical solutions or plans of action. Ideally, a consensus is reached on the best or 'most agreeable' option.

Overview

In a forum, participants will be asked to consider a problem or issue by:

- looking at the problem or opportunity from a range of perspectives or in a range of ways
- exchanging and sharing views with others
- weighing up benefits and trade offs of different options or approaches.

The forum conversation is supported by preliminary discussion to identify or frame the issues and considerations that shape the problem or opportunity. A framing document is prepared including key facts, and the description of options for consideration, framed in a way to create thoughtful consideration.

The participants in the forum should represent a balanced reflection of the diverse perspectives and stakes in the issues.

Process description

The focus of the forum is to engage people in deliberation rather than simply debate and discuss. The supporting material for the forum should invite people to consider all perspectives and to consider all options from a principled position. Options or approaches therefore need to be real.

Typically, forums take about two to three hours to run.

INTRO: A basic introduction – who you are, what will happen in the forum. Introduce the ground rules **(10 min)**.

PERSONAL STAKE: A short discussion of how the issue affects people individually and/or the community as a whole **(10 min)**.

EXAMINING THE OPTIONS: Discussion of each of the three or four options in the 'framing document' provided **(20 min each, or a total of 1 hour)**.

- Looking at different options for addressing a problem.
- Considering advantages AND trade-offs for each option.
- Asking people to recognise that every action will have a down-side and urging people to realistically consider which of these trade-offs they are willing to accept.

REFLECTIONS: where we tend to agree, where we're still divided, where we're still undecided, what questions we have **(20 min)**.

Asks participants to think about priorities and what matters most to themselves, their families, their communities, and our country.

Spectrum level

Involve / Collaborate / Empower

When to use

Deliberation is best used when:

- the issues are significant or strategic
- there is a range of possible actions and responses
- the problem or issue isn't easy to resolve
- the problem or issue matters to stakeholders and communities
- there isn't an agreed solution or approach.

Number of people

Anywhere between 20 and 70 people.

Resources/costs

The resources required for a Deliberative Forum are for:

- developing the framing document
- identifying participants
- venue costs
- facilitation
- reporting on the output of the forum.

Creator/Developer

- Kettering Foundation
- National Issues Forum

Method 4: Co-design

Purpose

Co-design enables a wide range of people and stakeholders to contribute to understanding the nature of a problem and make a creative contribution to formulating the problem's solution.

Overview

Co-design involves thinking through policy and service challenges from a customer or citizen's perspective. Stakeholders and citizens affected by the policy are involved in its design. The process of development is iterative (rather than confirming everything up front). This allows the process of learning to influence design. The policy developer's role is seen as being more like facilitators, rather than creators or experts.

Process description

First, develop draft criteria for the project's success and identify the potential challenge to be solved from a citizen or user perspective. This will help you make a decision about the relevance of a design-led approach. Participants are identified, often those affected or impacted by a policy. Policy advisors facilitate a workshop or series of workshops usually with multi-disciplinary teams from relevant parts of government, citizens, and other relevant stakeholders.

Where appropriate, the government team will work with citizens and other stakeholders to:

- frame the issue and evaluate what further information is needed
- explore lived experiences and key issues
- imagine the opportunities and brainstorm, scope and assess options
- test their risks and costs with prototypes and piloting initiatives.

Figure 2 on the next page sets out an example of a human-centred design approach. Methods then can be adopted within the co-design process itself including journey mapping, role play, prototyping, experience interviews, and personas. More information about the application of co-design approaches is set out in the Futures thinking page of the Policy Project's Policy Methods Toolbox.

Figure 2: An example of a human-centred design approach
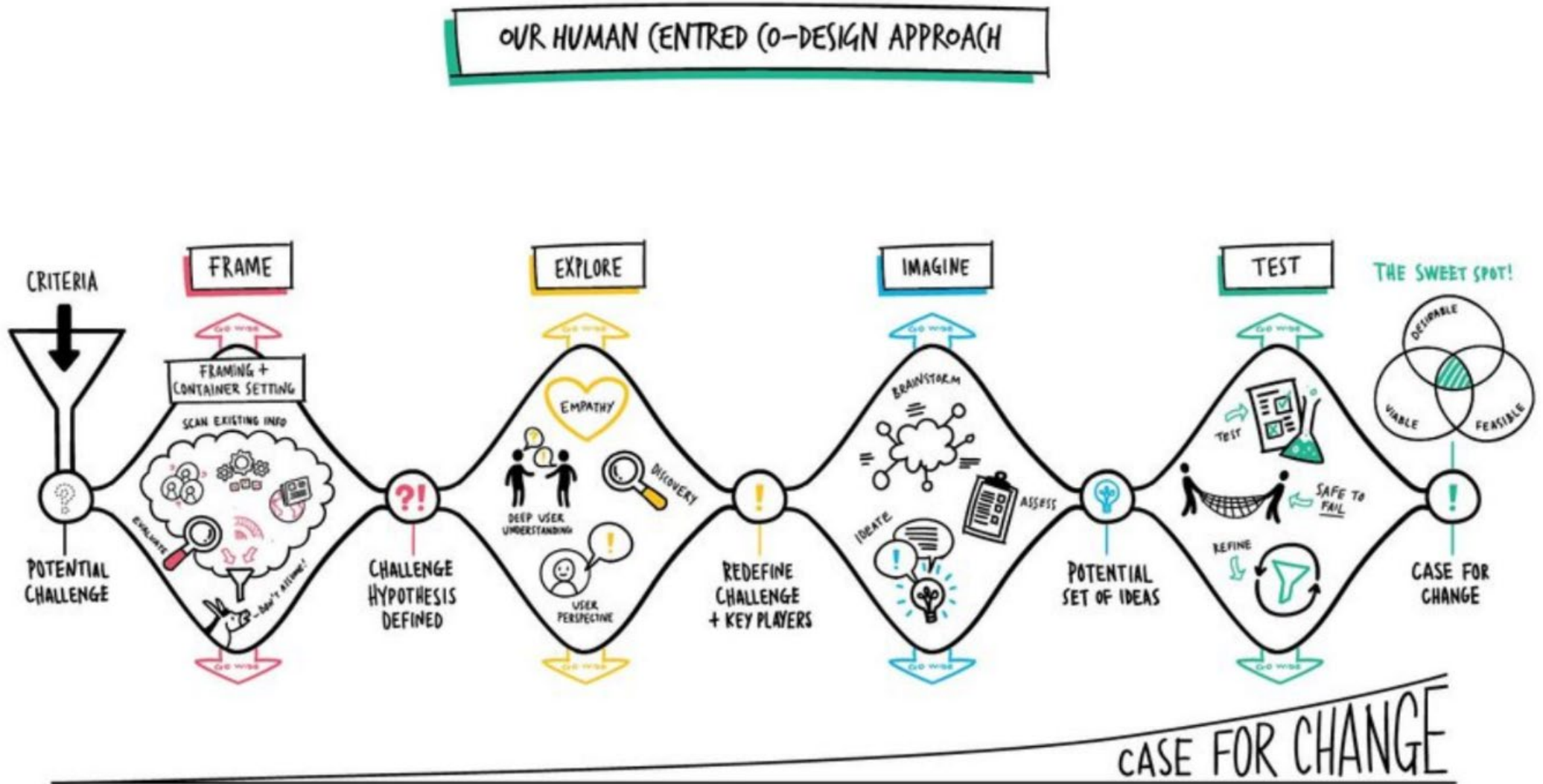
Source: Auckland Co-design Lab

Spectrum level

Involve / Collaborate

When to use

Co-design is most effective for human-centred problems when:

- you don't have existing data or information to guide you. This may be because you're confronting new issues, or because of the issue's complexity.

- the available resources match the complexity of the project, and the selected design approach can be delivered rigorously within budget.

- the intent and desired outcomes are clearly defined. Ambition and scope are clear. You know what the gaps in your knowledge are. All policy initiatives need this level of definition – design thinking projects in particular can struggle without it.

Co-design is highly iterative and this isn't always a good fit with more traditional linear approaches. Because design thinking focuses on people's experiences and not on systems, solutions often cross agencies and portfolio boundaries. Find out early whether there are any barriers to advising on a solution that could be implemented in another agency.

Number of people

Anywhere between 20 and 70 people.

Resources/costs

The resources required for co-design process are for:

- developing the co-design objectives and workshop materials
- identifying participants
- venue costs
- facilitation
- reporting of workshop output.

Constant and rapid iteration means that a level of financial tolerance for risk is required. You'll be less successful if the conditions and capabilities for innovation aren't in place. It's worth securing sponsorship and champions before proceeding.

Creator/Developer

A number of engagement specialists, academics, NGOs, private sector think tanks, and design groups have contributed to the development of co-design and design thinking methods. You can find more information about this on the Futures Thinking page of the Policy Project's Policy Methods Toolbox.

Method 5: Open space technology

Purpose

Open space technology generates a broad understanding of an opportunity or issues in relation to a problem or challenge, engaging a diverse range of perspectives.

Overview

Open space technology is a method for hosting a meeting, conference or summit which is focused on a particular purpose or topic, but which has no formal agenda.

Open space technology runs on two factors – the passion of the people participating and the responsibility to process the issue. In the 'self-organising' process, participants determine the topics for conversation, prompted by a conversation theme. In proposing a topic, a participant agrees to take responsibility for starting the conversation and ensuring the conversation is recorded.

Process description

- Frame a focus question.
- Identify potential participants.
- Send open invitations that explain the purpose of the meeting.
- Set the room up with no tables, only a large circle of chairs for the anticipated number of participants.
- Facilitator welcomes participants, who take their seats.
- Facilitator explains the context and clearly states the focus question.
- Facilitator explains that the blank wall is the agenda, and the group will decide on the breakout session topics and be free to choose where to go.

- Facilitator explains the 'Four Principles' and 'Law of Two Feet':

  Four Principles:
    - whoever comes are the right people
    - whatever happens is the only thing that could have
    - when it starts is the right time
    - when it's over it's over.

  '**Law of Two Feet**':
    - if you find yourself in a situation where you're neither learning or contributing, move somewhere where you can.

- Call on participants to take markers and paper and write down their issue or question and explain it to the group.
- Participant then posts it on the wall and nominates one of the pre-determined session times and places for discussing it.
- Once sessions topics are filled, all participants go and sign up for sessions.
- Sessions are run.
- People who convene a session are responsible for documenting the discussion about the key issues or questions.

The group comes together for the closing and sharing.

Spectrum level

Involve / Collaborate / Empower

When to use

Open space technology is best used early in the policy process when the issues and opportunities for the problem are still to be uncovered or defined.

Number of people

From a few hundred upward.

Resources/costs

The resources to run an open space technology workshop are required for:

- venue and hosting
- facilitation
- paper and computer resources for recording
- invitating participants.

Creator/Developer

Harrison Owen

Source: www.openspaceworld.org

Purpose

Participatory budgeting enables citizens to decide how to allocate a budget or resources for a particular outcome or an overall budget.

Overview

Participatory budgeting is an opportunity to build trust and confidence in the decision making and leadership of government. At the same time, it uses public participation to create and choose the best options to solve problems, take opportunities, or advance outcomes.

Process description

There's no one way of undertaking participatory budgeting. Participation may occur through an annual budget process, as set out below.

Figure 3: Participatory budgeting process

DESIGN THE PROCESS
A steering committee that represents the community creates the rules and engagement plan.

BRAINSTORM IDEAS
Through meetings and online tools, residents share and discuss ideas for projects.

DEVELOP PROPOSALS
Volunteer "budget delegates" develop the ideas into feasible proposals.

VOTE
Residents vote on the proposals that most serve the community's needs.

FUND WINNING PROJECTS
The government or institution funds and implements the winning ideas.

Typically, the three major elements are:

- brainstorming options
- shortlisting and developing options
- open decision making.

The process will use a mix of online and face-to-face ideation, deliberation, and decision making. Activating participation is key to building confidence in the decision-making process.

Spectrum level

Collaborate / Empower

When to use

Participatory budgeting is best used when the issues and options are defined or somewhat defined. Part of the available budget is allocated for decision making (usually 2 or 3 percent of an overall allocation).

Participatory budgeting is usually used in a specific geographic location.

Number of people

Large groups. There is no limit to the number who can participate.

Resources/costs

Participatory budgeting requires a commitment through the budget cycle. The resources required are:

- activation of participants and promotion
- online engagement tool
- communication of process, participation and deliberation decisions
- facilitation of deliberative elements of the process.

Creator/Developer

participatorybudgeting.org

Appendix

International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation for assessing community engagement approaches, varying across a spectrum of influence.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

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.