



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES



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INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with Council's Community Engagement Policy October 2009.

The Guidelines are part of a range of tools to assist staff undertaking or commissioning community engagement processes. Council is committed to a consistent and quality approach to community engagement. In an attempt to achieve this, a suite of standard tools has been developed for use by staff and/or consultants undertaking engagement processes on Council's behalf.

These Guidelines are in three parts. Part 1 provides the Background to Council's Community Engagement Framework and Community Engagement Clearing House. Part 2 provides the process guidelines and Part 3 a range of tools and more technical information to assist staff.

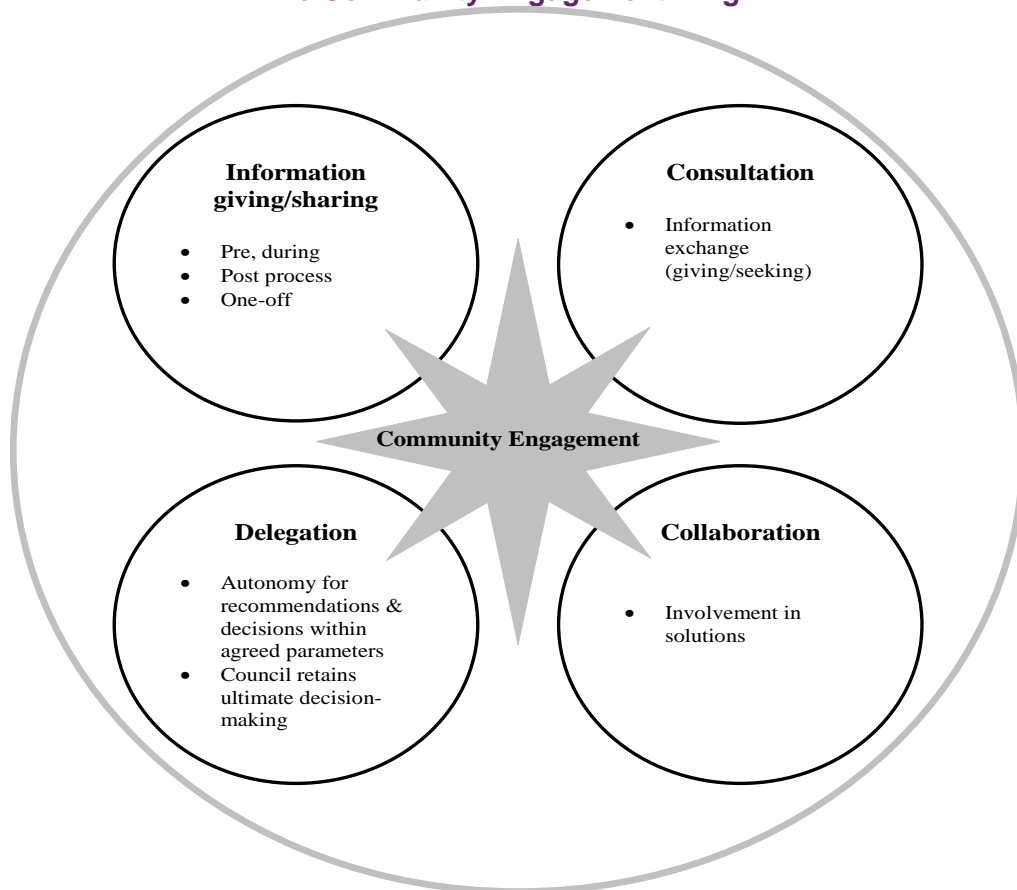
PART 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 Council's Community Engagement Framework

The *Community Engagement Ring* describes the relationship between council and the community. It depicts the multiple facets of engagement which are non-hierarchical and not mutually exclusive. These facets of engagement may be used in combination, and in any one project it is possible that a mixture of engagement types would be required.

The *Community Engagement Ring* represents a flexible relationship which could change based on the potential level of influence the community may have on council's planning and decision making. Levels of influence may vary based on council's intent for engagement and community need.

The Community Engagement Ring



Council is committed through its engagement processes to facilitating an informed and active community. Its role is to ensure that a meaningful relationship exists between the community and council. More specifically that:

- appropriate techniques are used by council to ensure that the right level of engagement is achieved
- a genuine opportunity is provided for community members to become involved in local issues, council services, facilities or council planning and policy development
- community engagement will not always bring about agreement or make everybody happy with a decision.

PART 1: BACKGROUND

The table below shows the intent behind the different levels of engagement. Differing levels of engagement may be necessary depending on what is hoped to be achieved. Within each level, there are a variety of engagement techniques that could be employed.

	Information Giving	Consultation	Collaboration	Delegation
Intent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness • Promote • Educate • Correct misinformation • Statutory requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek community needs, ideas, aspirations • Seek feedback on service or facility • Seek ownership/ understanding of outcome • Education • Statutory requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue has a high level of complexity • Seek community to provide/play a role in solutions • Shared resources required • There is a shared agenda • There is a need to create shared agenda • More than one key player • Seek ownership/ understanding of outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community ownership of solutions is required • Council does not have full scope of expertise/ knowledge • Seek ownership/ understanding of outcome

1.2 The Community Engagement Clearing House

The intention of the Community Engagement Clearing House is to enable a more coordinated and strategic approach to the way that community engagement is undertaken across the organisation. In particular it aims to:

- help staff undertake community engagement processes
- improve the quality of Council processes and
- facilitate organisation-wide information sharing about current and previous engagement projects.

PART 1: BACKGROUND

It is an umbrella term that incorporates the following:

- a suite of standard tools to assist staff in undertaking community engagement processes. These include: a survey template, evaluation forms for workshops and a set of ground rules for participants of workshops. These help to assess the organisation's performance against the indicators in the Delivery Plan
- directors monitoring engagement activities and outcomes through a three weekly report on council's community engagement program
- publication of the engagement program on council's website to encourage participation and provide feedback to the community
- Compass as a centralised information point for council's engagement activities, including a record of project details and an overview of what is happening/has happened across the organisation.

1.3 Role of Staff

Council officers undertaking or commissioning engagement processes are required to do the following.

- Understand and comply with council's Community Engagement Policy.
- Put forward their engagement proposal to the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU) for inclusion in Council's Community Engagement Clearing House Report for Directors to consider prior to its initiation.
- Document all engagement processes in Compass, including those done by consultants on council's behalf. It only takes 5-10 minutes to set up a project and even less to add information about progress. To get started contact SPU for assistance.
- Use the standard tools in any engagement processes. These are provided in Appendices 1-5 and are available electronically in the Community Engagement Section of Compass under About us.
- Ensure consultants undertaking engagement processes on council's behalf use the standard tools and collect the standard demographics.
- Ask the standard demographic questions in surveys and workshops. When the project is complete, please give this data to the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU) for collation. It will be analysed along with other council projects for organisational reporting purposes. If required, SPU can also provide a profile of participants from the information provided.
- Be aware that all engagement processes are included in council's Community Engagement Program on council's website, and be able to respond to community enquiries.
- Seek advice and support in planning and undertaking engagement processes from the Strategic Planning Unit as required.

PART 2: GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

It is the responsibility of the Strategic Planning Unit to:

- Provide a clear framework to support the organisation’s engagement activities, primarily through the Community Engagement Clearing House.
- Oversee the implementation of the Community Engagement Clearing House.
- Provide professional advice as needed to council officers and Councillors.
- Monitor the implementation of council’s Community Engagement Policy and call for a review as required.

PART 2: Guidelines for engaging with the community

2.1 How to Engage

	What to consider
Background Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been any previous research done on this topic/in this geographic area or within this community before? Can you use it or do you need to build on it? • Is undertaking an engagement process the most appropriate course of action or best way to get the information required? • Are there potential internal/external partners.
Planning your process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before starting, clarify the purpose and objectives of the process. • Identify how much influence from the community is needed and decide on what level(s) of engagement are required. This would be influenced by the nature of the issue (eg. scale/sensitivity of the issue, legislative requirement) and the stage where it is at. • What information/data is needed to provide and or receive. • How the information/data obtained will be analysed and used. If there is no need for it, it is best not to ask the question. SPU can help with analysis/methodologies/software. • Who needs to be engaged and are they a representative sample of the identified community. • Select technique(s) based on the level of engagement, data required, target group and available resources. • Consider how target groups will be invited to participate to improve accessibility such as hearing loops and interpreters. • Make it easy for people, simple language, location, time, venue and tools. • To maximise participation allow enough time for each stage. • Consider resources including people’s skill level, budget and time. • Assess who is best to undertake the process (staff, SPU, external). Sometimes an independent person might be better depending on the nature of the issue.

PART 2: GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

2.1 How to Engagecontinued

Getting organisational approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before embarking on the process make sure it has been discussed with the relevant manager(s) and any other internal stakeholders. • SPU must also be advised so that the proposed project can be incorporated into the Clearing House report to Directors for approval.
Conducting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always respect people – they are volunteering and you have asked for their help. • Make sure all involved are treated equally and know they can opt out. • Manage participant expectations by setting the scope of the engagement and how their input will be used upfront. • Involve the participants as early as possible. • Consider the safety of participants (eg. select an appropriate venue/time for target group). • Consider staff safety and council's Occupational Health & Safety requirements (eg. make sure if off-site or nights there are at least 2 staff). • Acknowledge VIP's (including MP's, Aboriginal elders) • Introduce staff and Councillors. Clarify their role.
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress and be flexible, sometimes a change of plan is necessary.
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the technique used, it is important to keep participants informed throughout the process of any changes, issues, progress. • It is important to inform participants of the results and how they were used at the end of the process.
Evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the objectives of the process were met - the sample was representative (through analysis of standard demographic data) - any lessons learnt • Use of council's standard evaluation forms and the confidence question in the Survey template contained in Appendices 1-5 will assist you in evaluating your process.
Implementing results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the process and results complete how are these being translated into an outcome or impacting on the Unit's work or council's decision making?
Sharing knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the process is complete it is important to share the results with others in the organisation or outside the organisation who may be interested. • If there are any potentially interested community members, approach them in an appropriate manner.

PART 2: GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

2.2 Choosing a Technique

Once a decision about what level of engagement is required to achieve, an appropriate technique should be selected. The techniques incorporated in the table below are only examples and not definitive. A comprehensive list of techniques, their strengths and weaknesses and tips on their implementation is provided in Appendix 2. SPU is available to assist in selecting an appropriate technique and to help staff get started.

	Information Giving	Consultation	Collaboration	Delegation
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's newsletter • Advertisement • Displays • Website • Brochure • Information line • Information Session (DA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Focus groups • Surveys • Interviews • Public meeting • Submissions • Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charettes • Workshops • Citizens' Juries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taskforce • Advisory Committees

2.3 Reaching People

Recognise that all people have a right to participate as citizens. Consider that people have different abilities, experiences, vulnerabilities and needs. Some individuals/groups (eg. people with disabilities, young people, people with low level English) may need to be engaged in different ways. When planning think about people's situations and what would make your process more accessible.

When trying to engage with children or young people as a rule:

- informed consent is essential. Parent/guardian permission is required for people under 16 years
- conduct in usual setting with carer/parent/advocate present
- make sure there are always 2 staff members, preferably a male and female
- keep it simple and make it easy

Consider that age appropriate strategies are important.

The following should be used as a guide:

Technique	Minimum Age
Drawings/discussion	3 years
Group discussion	3 years
Internet/written surveys	10 years
Telephone surveys	16 years

When engaging specifically with young people and children it is also recommended that you complete a Prohibited Employment Declaration. This can be found on the Commission for Children & Young People's website: www.kids.nsw.gov.au

PART 2: GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

2.4 Your Shire Your Say Residents Panel

Council is currently trialling the Your Shire Your Say Residents Panel. Panel members have been recruited from the general population and participate in engagement activities for a two-year period, or a maximum of six to eight consultations per year. The members make up a demographically representative sample of the population of the LGA. These residents have agreed to participate in council engagement processes and the response rate is generally high.

Panel members can be recruited by the Strategic Planning Unit to suit individual project needs. Contact Strategic Planning Unit on 9710 0684.

2.5 Participants' Privacy

Council is committed to protecting the privacy of members of the community who participate in our processes. In your processes, measures need to be put in place to ensure participants' anonymity. Personal information gathered as part of process cannot be shared with anyone else in/outside the organisation for any other use, unless this has been previously agreed to with participants.

For more detail please refer to the Privacy statement in the Community Engagement Policy.

2.6 Sensitive topics

Sometimes topics/issues may be socially or politically sensitive (eg. alcohol consumption, illicit drug use, criminal behaviour, violence). Engagement on sensitive topics should be planned with Strategic Planning Unit and council's Ombudsman's Office.

2.7 Commissioning external consultants

If commissioning external consultants to undertake a discreet community engagement process or community engagement as part of a broader project, they need to have the relevant experience and skills.

It is necessary to ensure that selection processes incorporate appropriate selection criteria. SPU can help to develop these and also with the selection processes.

2.8 Where to get help

The Strategic Planning Unit can:

- Assist in the planning and design of engagement activities
- Help you get started and record project details in Compass
- Assist in writing consultant's briefs/engaging consultants to undertake community engagement processes on council's behalf
- Undertake community engagement of a strategic, corporate, cross divisional or shire wide nature.

Contact Strategic Planning Unit on 9710 0684.

PART 3: APPENDIX 1

External Facilitation Evaluation Form

Event.....
Date



Thank you for participating in this session. We would appreciate some comments and feedback to help us improve our processes. All forms will be analysed collectively and treated anonymously.

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Before the Group session

It was made clear what the session/workshop was about

The session

There was adequate opportunity for discussion and input

I was able to have the level of involvement I wanted

I felt comfortable to express my views

I felt that my views were listened to by the facilitator(s)

The facilitators were clear in their explanations

I enjoyed the format of the session

Overall, I was satisfied with the session

2. The pace of the session was

Just right Too fast Too slow

3. In what ways did you benefit from being involved in the Group? (You may tick more than one response)

- Opportunity to understand more about the proposal
- Opportunity to hear what others think about the issue
- Opportunity to provide my comments
- Opportunity to have an input into council's decision making processes
- No benefit and please specify why

**4. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statement?
Your input in this session will help council's decision on this matter.**

Strongly
Disagree

Disagree

Neither

Agree

Strongly
Agree

5. Would you be prepared to participate in future community engagement activities?

Yes

No

6. Some background about yourself

a) Age group

14 & under

30-34

50-54

70-74

15-19

35-39

55-59

75-79

20-24

40-44

60-64

80-84

25-29

45-49

65-69

85+

b) Gender

Male

Female

c) How long have you lived in the shire?

Less than one year

10 - <20 years

1 - <3 years

20 years or more

3 - <5 years

5 - <10 years

d) Suburb of residence

e) What language do you speak at home or with your parents?

7. What do you see as the main issue facing the Shire?

.....
.....

8. Any additional comments?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you

PART 3: APPENDIX 2

ESD Information Session Evaluation Form



Event

Date

*Thank you for participating in this Information Session.
We would appreciate some comments and feedback to help us improve our processes. All forms will be analysed collectively and treated anonymously.*

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND LEAVE IT ON YOUR CHAIR

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Before the Information Session

The information provided about the application was appropriate

It was made clear what the session was about

The Information Session

There was adequate opportunity for discussion and input

I was able to have the level of involvement I wanted

I felt comfortable to express my views/ask questions

I felt that my views/questions were listened to by the staff

Staff were clear in their explanations

I enjoyed the format of the session

Overall, I was satisfied with the session

2. The pace of the session was

Too fast Just right Too slow

3. In what ways did you benefit from being involved in the Information Session?

(you may tick more than one response)

- Opportunity to understand more about the application
- Opportunity to hear what others think about the issue
- Opportunity to make enquiries
- Opportunity to express my issues
- No benefit and please specify why

4. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statement?

Your input in this session will help council's decision on this matter.

Strongly
Disagree

Disagree

Neither

Agree

Strongly
Agree

5. Would you be prepared to participate in future consultations?

Yes

No

6. Some background about yourself

a) Age group

14 & under

30-34

50-54

70-74

15-19

35-39

55-59

75-79

20-24

40-44

60-64

80-84

25-29

45-49

65-69

85+

b) Gender

Male

Female

c) How long have you lived in the shire?

Less than one year

10 - <20 years

1 - <3 years

20 years or more

3 - <5 years

5 - <10 years

d) Suburb of residence

e) What language do you speak at home or with your parents?

7. What do you see as the main issue facing the Shire?

.....
.....

8. Any additional comments?

.....
.....
.....

PART 3: APPENDIX 3

Internal Facilitation Evaluation Form



Event.....
Date

Thank you for participating in the workshop. We would appreciate some comments and feedback to help us improve our processes. All forms will be analysed collectively and treated anonymously.

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements

strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

Before the Group session

It was made clear what the session/workshop was about

The session

There was adequate opportunity for discussion and input

I was able to have the level of involvement I wanted

I felt comfortable to express my views

I felt that my views were listened to by the facilitator(s)

The facilitators were clear in their explanations

I enjoyed the format of the session

Overall, I was satisfied with the session

2. The pace of the session was

Too fast Just right Too slow

3. In what ways did you benefit from being involved in the Group? (You may tick more than one response)

- Opportunity to understand more about the proposal
- Opportunity to hear what others think about the issue
- Opportunity to provide my comments
- Opportunity to have an input into council's decision making processes

4. How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statement? Your input in this session will help council's decision on this matter.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree Strongly Agree

5. Some background about yourself – What Council Division are you in?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Community and Recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Property | <input type="checkbox"/> Executive |

6. How long have you worked for Council?

- Less than one year
- 1 - <3 years
- 3 - <5 years
- 5 - <10 years
- 10 - <20 years
- 20 years or more

7. Do you live in the Shire?

- Yes
- No

8. Any additional comments?

.....

.....

.....

PART 3: APPENDIX 4

GUIDELINES FOR FAIR PLAY

- **Trust and respect everyone**
- **Everyone participates**
- **Everyone Listens**
- **Be creative**
- **Share your ideas and add value to others**
- **Write down all ideas**
- **Critique the idea, not the person**

PART 3: APPENDIX 5

SURVEY TEMPLATE

1. About this template

This template is set as a guide to help you in the development of your surveys. This includes surveys that consultants may be doing for you or that you are putting together yourself. All SSC surveys should have certain elements in their introduction and also collect certain demographic data at the end.

Below you will find a few standard introductions that you can incorporate into a written, phone or face to face survey. You will need to add the details of your survey and may need to modify these to suit your purposes however the basic elements should stay.

You will also find some standard demographic questions for use with all surveys. This data will help you with your analysis and will be collated with data from other consultations to give us an overall picture of who is involved in our processes.

2. Standard survey introductions

2a) For use with written surveys that will be given to people to fill out (eg mail, electronic, letterboxed)

This survey is being conducted by the(*insert unit*). It has been sent to(*insert target group if appropriate*). We would welcome your thoughts and opinions. Any information that you give will not allow you to be personally identified in any way. Please return in the reply paid envelope provided by(*insert date*).

2b) For use with surveys that will be administered over the phone

Hello, my name is. (*first name only*).. from Sutherland Shire Council. I'm calling to ask some questions about(*insert subject*). Is now a good time? May I please speak to the..... (*insert respondent criteria eg. Youngest male aged 16 or more, OR Someone in your house aged over 16 years*).

[IF RESPONDENT IS NOT AT HOME, ARRANGE A SUITABLE TIME TO CALL BACK]
[WHEN REQUIRED PERSON IS ON PHONE REPEAT INTRODUCTION IF NECESSARY]

I need to check that this household is in the (*target survey area eg. Sutherland Shire, suburb*)
[CONFIRM & CONTINUE]

I need to inform you that the interview should take approximately..... minutes.
Any information that you give will not allow you to be personally identified in any way.

2c) For use with surveys that will be administered face to face

<u>Survey No</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Time</u>
------------------	--------------	-------------

Hello, my name is(insert first name only) from (insert as appropriate ie Sutherland Shire Council/ Sutherland Leisure Centre).. We are conducting research into people's perceptions of(insert topic). Would you mind taking a few minutes of your time to answer some questions for me? [tailor to suit needs/use of survey]

3. Standard demographic questions for all surveys

All Sutherland Shire Council surveys must ask for the following demographic data. This will not only assist you to understand who you have engaged but will help us to obtain an overall Council wide picture that we can report on. These questions should form the end of your survey.

Q. Some background about yourself

a) Age group

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 35-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-59 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 75-79 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 40-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 60-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 80-84 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 65-69 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 85+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-54 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> 70-74 | | |

b) Gender

- Male
 Female

c) How long have you lived in the Shire?

- Less than one year
 1 - <3 years
 3 - <5 years
 5 - <10 years
 10 - <20 years
 20 years or more

d) Suburb of residence

e) What language do you speak at home or with your parents?

Q. What do you see as the main issue facing the Shire?

.....
.....

Final Q. Any additional comments?

.....
.....

Thank you

4. Optional demographic questions

If you require the following information for your analysis you can incorporate it into the demographic section.

Dwelling type

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Flat in a block of 1-3 storeys | <input type="checkbox"/> | Villa/townhouse or dual occupancy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Flat in a block over 3 stories | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Separate house | | |

Household Structure

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Live alone | <input type="checkbox"/> | Group household |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Couple without children | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other arrangement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Couple with children | <input type="checkbox"/> | Refused |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Single parent + child | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 + related adults with/without children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Multiple family household | | |

5. What information does the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU) need from you?

We need to have access to the standard demographic information and questions so that we can combine this with other surveys and consultations and report on who Council is consulting with. Please contact: Jenny Hoff on x5816.

6. Getting help with your survey

Did you know that the Strategic Planning Unit can assist you to design or analyse your survey? For more information contact us on 9710 0684.

7. Standard confidence question

Please insert this question towards the end of your survey.

a) How strongly do you agree/disagree with the following statement?

Your input in this session will help council's decision on this matter.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly Agree</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

PART 3: APPENDIX 6

Appendix 6: Community engagement techniques

Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Advertisement</p> <p>Information placed in the newspaper as a way to inform the community about an issue or a decision made. Advertisement usually goes into the local newspaper, the "Leader" often in Council's column and/or Sydney wide based paper. Ads can also be placed in Engadine District News and Shire life.</p>	<p>Advertisements in newspapers are great for letting people know what is going on, when events are occurring and who to contact. The public expect to be informed via the newspaper on significant Council events. It is also a quick way of getting information to the public.</p>	<p>Advertisement should not alone be considered adequate to inform a broad range of members of community or generate a diverse range of input into a consultation exercise. If the advertisement is not written in plain English and is too technical, it can confuse the public and create confusion rather than clarity. It is costly and time limited.</p>	<p>Any advertisement must go for approval through the Communication's Unit and presented with corporate standards and logo.</p>
<p>Charettes</p> <p>Is an intensive consultative planning process for a period of two to three days. It involves the coming together of planners, agency stakeholders and representatives of the general community to consider community and design issues for a significant planning proposal. Several techniques are used within a charette including focus groups and public meetings. Generic Handouts must be used.</p>	<p>It is a consultative approach that attempts to increase efficiency in planning and design process. It can open up horizons for local people to imagine and visualise possibilities. With expert facilitation, the process can be transparent and accessible, giving voice to all participants, including those who may not be as confident as others.</p>	<p>The process is open to manipulation if not facilitated in a careful manner. Only a limited number of people can work usefully in one place at a time.</p>	<p>Brief all participants on the process at the beginning of the charrette and remind them throughout the process of the overall the goal of the exercise.</p>

Appendix 6: Community engagement techniques

Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Citizens Juries</p> <p>Similar to the Panel but participants are recruited on a random basis with a stratified sample of people that reflects the profile of the local population. Numbers are normally limited to between 12-25. The Jury hears submissions from experts asks questions and votes on an issue. There must be a consensus outcome and the group stays together until a consensus is reached. Generic handouts must be used. Contact SPU to assist on design of technique.</p>	<p>Opportunity to canvas in depth views once people have received and had time to digest new information</p>	<p>Relies on volunteers willing to contribute substantial time to discuss an issue in depth. There is not necessarily direct action or follow through on the item discussed. The extent of decision making by the group may in reality be limited. Can be staff and resource costly</p>	<p>Plan well in advance. Be clear about participants role in the process</p>
<p>Citizens Panel</p> <p>A panel of citizens, randomly selected to consider a particular issue.</p>	<p>Opportunity to canvas in depth views once people have received and had time to digest new information</p>	<p>Relies on volunteers willing to contribute substantial time to discuss an issue in depth. There is not necessarily direct action or follow through on the item discussed. The extent of decision making by the group may in reality be limited. Can be staff and resource costly</p>	<p>Plan well in advance. Be clear about participants role in the process</p>

Appendix 6: Community engagement techniques

Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Community News (Council's quarterly newsletter)</p> <p>The newsletter is generally used as providing opportunities for people to stay connected, periodic up-dating on projects and communicating a continuing commitment. "Our Shire" is the Sutherland Shire Council's quarterly newsletter and is letterboxed to all households in Sutherland Shire. It is published in January, April, July and October each year. Articles for the newsletter usually need to be submitted to Communications about 4 weeks prior to the publishing date. Newsletter includes calendar of events, current councillor's details exhibitions, competitions and council budget update.</p>	<p>Delivered to all households in the Shire. Opportunity to report on a great variety of issues and news items. Good for including photos and other visual news items.</p>	<p>Timing of distribution needs to be considered to ensure accuracy of information.</p>	<p>The newsletter is a great tool. Plan your advertising on coming events around the production time line of the newsletter so you maximise its information distribution opportunity.</p>
<p>Council Advisory Committees</p> <p>Advisory committees and task forces are expertise based bodies constituted around a particular issue, such as services for young people, nuclear reactor; a population group, such as aged persons; or an issue, such as domestic violence. They generally include representatives of relevant government and non-government agencies and consumers. The role of advisory committees and task forces is to provide advice to government on appropriate changes to programs or policy and make recommendations about specific services. Advisory committees operate as an ongoing structure while task forces are generally short term and focus on the development of a specific strategy or program.</p>	<p>Experts of an issue can be heard and can provide practical recommendations to a significant decision making bodies.</p>	<p>Decision-makers may have decided the outcome of the process before the consultation process and thus participants feel cynical about this level of engagement. Decision-makers might be restrained in the way they account and plan for their resources.</p>	<p>Ensure all stakeholders are represented at the advisory committee.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Deliberative Polls</p> <p>Can be likened to an enhanced community poll where randomly selected participants are briefed and then come together to deliberate on a matter. The outcome or final vote is based on informed debate from a representative sample of the population. A deliberative poll can be preceded by a community poll. Requires an expert facilitator. Participant evaluation should be done. Evaluations should be done by participants.</p>	<p>Opportunity to canvas in depth views once people have received and had time to digest new information</p>	<p>Relies on volunteers willing to contribute substantial time to discuss an issue in depth; There is not necessarily direct action or follow through on the item discussed. The extent of decision making by the group may in reality be limited. Can be staff and resource costly.</p>	<p>Tips: Plan well in advance. Be clear about participants role in the process</p>
<p>E-consulting</p> <p>Using a web page and receiving submissions by email. Generally used as part of a mix of consultation mechanisms. Ideal for those with access to the internet.</p>	<p>A quick and cost effective way to inform the public on important information and receive their feedback. Plans and maps are expensive to print and with electronic information the cost is greatly reduced and is environmentally friendly.</p>	<p>Not all people have computers or are connected to the Internet. If the document uses up a lot of memory (megabytes) it might cause technical difficulties to the people trying to download the document.</p>	<p>Ensure you create an introductory page that explains the process of downloading the various sections of the document to the public. Document is saved usually in PDF format and an Acrobat reader is required to read the document. Try to access the document from a home computer so to test that access is possible.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>E-Inform (website, SSC News)</p> <p>Information on the proposal/plan that are to be consulted on is made available on the Council's website. People can download the document.</p>	<p>A quick and cost effective way to inform the public on important information. Plans and maps are expensive to print and with electronic information the cost is greatly reduced and is environmentally friendly.</p>	<p>Not all people have computers or are connected to the Internet. If the document uses up a lot of memory (megabytes) it might cause technical difficulties for the people trying to download the document.</p>	<p>Ensure you create an introductory page that explains the process of downloading the various sections of the document to the public. Document is saved usually in PDF format and an Acrobat reader is required to read the document. Try to access the document from a home computer so to test that access is possible.</p>
<p>E-Technologies (blogs, chatrooms)</p> <p>Using emerging technologies to maintain an on-going dialogue between all parties.</p>	<p>Is an immediate form of engagement. Discussion occurs as and when issues are raised. Workshopping of issues (or documents) happens immediately. People can contribute from wherever they are at the time, and are not restricted by having to be in a certain place at a certain time. Useful for engaging younger age groups. Allows for participants to raise issues of importance to them, as well as to workshop solutions.</p>	<p>Limited reach across age groups and demographics.</p> <p>Can be difficult to control what is discussed.</p> <p>Resource time intensive.</p>	<p>Sutherland Shire Council does not yet utilise these methodologies. Until such a time as this occurs there are no tips for use.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Exhibitions - formal</p> <p>Formal exhibition is often regulation by legislation and includes an exhibition of information or plan to the public which it can view generally at the Council libraries and on Council's website. The aim of this public exhibition process is to provide the community with an opportunity to view a particular proposal or plan and provide their comment through a formal submission process.</p>	<p>The community can view a proposal at their leisure or other significant information at their leisure and thus be informed prior to making a decision.</p>	<p>Information that is being displayed can be misinterpreted if it is too technical, includes jargon and is not in plain English. People whose first language is not English, who are illiterate or have a visual impairment might find public displays a barrier to the engagement process.</p>	<p>Test the display out by asking someone unconnected to the issue to preview it and provided honest feedback.</p>
<p>Face to Face Interviews</p> <p>Face to face interviews which can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. They can also be both qualitative and quantitative. They have the potential to allow for open ended discussion on what people think or how they feel.</p>	<p>Face to face interviews are more personal than written surveys. The people administering the interview give the issue a public face which can positively or negatively effect the issue.</p>	<p>If people have a lot to say on the issue that is being surveyed and the survey does not ask questions concerning these, the survey can be a very frustrating experience for the participant. Surveys are a one-way method of consultation. Surveys are not a participatory technique in themselves. The information gathered and generated is very specific and the process provides little opportunity for community concerns or questions outside those addressed in the survey. Interviewers need to be aware how you would like participants selected (random or otherwise). They must also be able to handle difficult people.</p>	<p>Test the survey before you run it and ensure instructions for interviewers is consistent. Have trained interviewers.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>General Newsletter</p> <p>Newsletter which is project or issue specific sent to a particular target group or community.</p>	<p>Opportunity to keep people informed and report on project/issue report on. Good for including photos and other visual news items.</p>	<p>Should only exist while there is a need. If it is conditioned indefinitely, filling it with information may be difficult.</p>	<p>Ensure accuracy, currency and make it relevant.</p>
<p>Hotline or Information Line</p> <p>Can be a pre-recorded message or a telephone line staffed with personnel that can provide information and respond to enquiries. Pre-recorded option has message prepared by project office to common, anticipated questions. Easy means for collection of requests for further information data.</p>	<p>Easy access to information for people with a telephone which includes housebound, visually impaired, elderly people etc. Service can be provided with minimal resources. Takes pressure off entire unit when there is a big issue/proposal.</p>	<p>Pre-recorded messages require technology infrastructure, processes and resources to respond to enquiries. If it is controversial the lack of staff contact could cause frustration.</p>	<p>Important that staff are well informed on the issue and feedback processes. Pre-recorded messages should be comprehensive.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Information Sessions</p> <p>General community briefings on an issue or pending change. Usually information sessions include an overview, explanation of the background and purpose of the issue that is being presented. Information sessions can include a slide show or other audio visual aids, question time and a chance for people to comment on the issue. The public should evaluate information sessions at the end of the briefing session.</p>	<p>A good process to personally introduce the issue to the public and to clarify any misunderstanding about an issue on the spot. Question time is an important part of an information session. Questions and comments of the public should be recorded verbatim on butcher's paper or through some after clear, visible mechanism.</p>	<p>If the community is strongly divided on the issue presented at the information session, information sessions can be a venue of dealing with this conflict and hidden agendas of the public can take over the information session. An experienced facilitator is required.</p>	<p>Research the information well that is being presented and have it presented in clear manner and expect conflicting questions and comments and prepare a strategy to deal with pending conflict. Request for the people to RSVP prior to the meeting so people attending can be estimated. However, remember many people don't RSVP, they just turn up.</p>
<p>Letter of notification or advice</p> <p>Letter is sent to the public regarding a specific issue. Letter could be targeted to specific people or sent to all members of community. Letters can be personally addressed or send as a general 'Dear Resident' letter to all people.</p>	<p>Provides a guaranteed way of informing all residents. It is a more personal and targeted approach than finding an advertisement in the newspaper.</p>	<p>People don't always open the mail. Illiterate people, people whose first language is not English and those with visual impairment will not get the information.</p>	<p>Make sure the database of the people's names is as current as possible.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Letterbox drop</p> <p>A letterbox drop is any information that is published into a letter, a flier or pamphlet and then letterboxed into a specific targeted area or for all the shire's households. It is an effective way of contacting households within an identified area affected by an issue or a proposal.</p>	<p>Provides a guaranteed way of informing all residents in your target area.</p>	<p>Letterboxing may not be reliable. A leaflet may be included with several other articles of junk mail and discarded before reading. Illiterate people and people whose first language is not English, and can not read English, will not be included in this engagement technique.</p>	<p>Line up distributor and allow enough time for distribution time.</p>
<p>Public Displays</p> <p>An exhibition of information or plan to the public which can be viewed generally at the Council Administration building, libraries and other nominated public spaces. The aim of this public display process is to provide the community with a visual summary of a significant issue, proposal or plan.</p>	<p>The community can see a proposal or other significant information and thus be informed on the issue. Can be delivered with minimal resources.</p>	<p>Information that is being displayed can be misinterpreted if it is too technical, includes jargon and is not in plain English. People whose first language is not English, who are illiterate or have a visual impairment might find public displays a barrier to the engagement process.</p>	<p>Allow adequate time to install display and also for people to view the material. Test the display out by asking someone unconnected to the issue to preview it and provided honest feedback.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Public inquiries, hearings and forums</p> <p>Public inquiries and hearings seek to identify and examine the relevant factors and circumstances relating to a particular government decision or policy; their implementation; or the operation of a particular program or agency. Inquiries and hearings are often conducted in response to dissatisfaction or concerns expressed by customers or by members of Parliament. Public forums generally focus on specific issues with the intention of highlighting problems and developing appropriate strategies. Speakers representing different interests are generally invited to address the forum to express their views.</p>	<p>Public forums allow people to be informed and involved on an issue. The process itself, of being part of a well facilitated forum, can be a great tool to build links in the community and an example of democracy in action.</p>	<p>If the facilitator/s of the forum do not incorporate processes for people to contribute and communicate openly, the forum will feel like a tokenistic experience for its participants. Facilitator/s need to be experienced at dealing with challenging forum participant behaviour and set a transparent and clear process in place for fair and clear communication.</p>	<p>Ensure everyone is clear on roles, purpose and desired outcomes. Brief all people involved in presenting at the forum regarding the process of the gathering.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Public Meeting</p> <p>Public meetings provide a means to present information and proposals within a framework that allows for immediate discussion and feedback. Public meetings also allow for the level of public interest in or concern over an issue to be gauged. They are often conducted at a local or regional level and focus on proposals concerning that area. Generic handouts must be used.</p>	<p>Public meetings provide a great opportunity for people to receive information and network amongst themselves.</p>	<p>If facilitator of the public meeting is not skilled and experienced in facilitation and presenting information appropriately, the meeting can fail to be effective. The facilitator needs to be a good communicator and experienced in conflict management. The facilitator also needs to be able to be confident to deal with overt conflict and set guidelines for fair play. People attending can use this as an avenue to 'grandstand' and raise issues they would like addressed rather than considering it as an information tool.</p>	<p>It is very important to do your homework and know who will be attending the meeting so to prepare accordingly. It is important that you have an appropriate venue and resources.</p>
<p>Referendum</p> <p>A Council may take a poll of electors for its information and guidance on any matter. Polls can be divided into three categories:</p> <p>A referendum is a poll initiated by a council in order to give effect to certain matters prescribed by the Local Government Act (1993). Voting at a referendum is compulsory for everyone registered on the electoral role. The result of a referendum is binding. In effect a referendum ensures the participation of the community in its decision making process.</p>	<p>Involves the maximum number of people and can raise profile of an issue</p>	<p>Subject to pressure by uninformed discussion. Cannot address complex issues.</p>	<p>Is the issue simple enough to be addressed in a broad way.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Search Conferences</p> <p>Search conferences are specifically aimed at building up a picture of the issues and concerns in a specific area. They are particularly useful in areas which previously may have received only limited government or public attention or where data and research is not comprehensive. Search conferences aim at wide ranging participation.</p>	<p>Opportunity to capture innovative ideas from a diverse range of interests and perspectives</p>	<p>Costly in terms of time and the input may not translate directly to action. Hence there may be credibility concerns in the longer term by participants</p>	<p>Use when looking to redefine a problem and chart a new way forward Don't use when decision makers are unwilling to be part of the process</p>
<p>Site/street meetings</p> <p>Meeting held on the site of a specific issue such as, for example, a playground, at a building that is being proposed or in a neighbourhood street where works will be carried out.</p>	<p>People can often visualise the issue much better at a site meeting. It makes the issue more concrete. Local people who are interested can easily get to the meeting.</p>	<p>Site might be noisy, weather unpredictable and dangerous to the public. Occupational Health and safety needs to be considered.</p>	<p>Visit the site beforehand in order to find the most suitable place for the meeting. Have a wet weather plan. A microphone might be needed.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Small groups and focus groups</p> <p>Small groups and focus groups can assist with developing proposals and ideas around specific issues within an informal structure. Focus groups and small groups are particularly well suited to providing opportunities for all participants to contribute to discussion because they generally involve working in small groups. Focus groups often comprise representatives of a specific population or special needs group while workshops generally involve broader participation. Generic handouts must be used.</p>	<p>Small groups and focus groups allow people to be involved and collaborate on an issue. The process itself, of being part of a well facilitated small group, can be a great tool to build links in the community.</p>	<p>If the facilitator/s of the group do not incorporate processes for people to contribute and communicate openly, the group development process will fail to develop and in a way the group becomes more like an information session. Facilitator/s need to be experienced at dealing with challenging group participant behaviour such as dominating the group.</p>	<p>Make sure everyone is clear on their roles and the purpose of the group and desired outcome.</p>
<p>Submissions - formal and informal</p> <p>Members of the public, businesses, government agencies and other stakeholders are invited to make submissions on a range of activities and plans that council undertakes. These may be statutory exhibitions as in the case of land use plans providing opportunities to monitor the potential impacts of land use policy. Submissions may also be invited to gauge public response to designs or proposed activities and to minimise potential negative impacts of these activities. Often, proformas may be used to assist participants and ensure consistency in information.</p>	<p>Allows documentation of issues and comments about particular issues within a specific time frame.</p>	<p>Only available to people who feel comfortable in expressing their view either written, or by other specified means. It excludes people who feel that their view is not as important as other views and who may not come forward to make a statement.</p>	<p>Allow submissions in a diverse format where this is possible. Be clear in inviting submissions about what can be commented upon and what is beyond the scope of this invitation.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Telephone surveys</p> <p>Telephone surveys are undertaken to reach a broad cross section of people, to seek their opinion on issues, their stated activity preferences and to outline choices between limited options.</p>	<p>Allows for random selection. Reach a greater number of people fairly quickly. Can be specific about selection of areas from which to interview people.</p>	<p>Surveys are a way of gathering information. In the telephone survey interviewers only speak to people who are comfortable using a telephone. Without correction this can lead to survey bias. Calling people at home or at work may be perceived as intrusive and respondents will only accept a limited length of interview time. Respondents cannot be involved in detailed discussion as with for example a focus group.</p>	<p>Test the survey before you run it. Trained interview staff.</p>
<p>Web based surveys</p> <p>Surveys can be completed online through software Council subscribes to (Survey Monkey). Links can be made either from a website or from a direct email invitation.</p>	<p>Allows access to community members quickly at a very low cost. Allows you to access geographically disbursed groups and individuals who may not be readily engaged by other methods.</p>	<p>Requires internet technology. Limited control over who participates.</p>	<p>You will need to contact SPU to gain access to the software. SPU can also help with the survey design.</p>

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Technique	Strengths	Weaknesses	Tips
<p>Workshops and large groups</p> <p>Workshops and large groups can assist with developing proposals and ideas around specific issues within an informal structure. Workshops are particularly well suited to providing opportunities for all participants to contribute to discussion because they generally involve breaking the larger group up and participants working in small groups. Generic handouts must be used.</p>	<p>Workshops and large groups allow people to be involved and collaborate on an issue. The process itself, of being part of a well facilitated large group, can be a great tool to build links in the community. Maximise participant input with small groups, can work on the same or different issues at the same time.</p>	<p>If the facilitator/s of the group do not incorporate processes for people to contribute and communicate openly, the group development process will fail to develop and in a way the group becomes more like an information session. Facilitator/s need to be experienced at dealing with challenging group participant behaviour such as dominating the group. Resource intensive as each small group needs a facilitator and possibly a scribe.</p>	<p>Make sure everyone is clear on their roles, the purpose of the group session(s) and desired outcome.</p>
<p>Written Surveys</p> <p>Surveys are used to gather all sorts of data, opinions and feelings. Surveys can be administered over the telephone, face to face or mailed out to participants to complete. Questions can be closed and or open ended to provide data and comments. They can be cross-sectional or longitudinal and can access a range of participants depending on the method of administration.</p>	<p>Surveys generate data or statistics, gain insight into people's perceptions and can aid forward planning.</p>	<p>Surveys are a one-way method of consultation. Surveys are not a participatory technique in themselves. The information gathered and generated is very specific and the process provides little opportunity for community concerns or questions outside those addressed in the survey.</p>	<p>Test the survey before you run it and ensure instructions for your interviewers are consistent.</p>