



Sustainable
Development Commission

Planning & Designing Engagement Processes:

Stage 4: Planning the Process

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Stage 4: Planning the engagement process

This is the creative stage of designing your engagement process. You'll need to put in front of you all the work done to date from Stages 1, 2 and 3. To view the other stages and further guidance please visit the SDC engagement webpages: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/engagement.html>

It is now that you ask yourself:

“What needs to happen to get those stakeholders engaged in a way that will deliver the project aims, bearing in mind all the context and boundaries?”

4.1 What values (or principles) will guide your approach?

Before you begin to think about the process itself, it's helpful to agree a set of values (or principles) that will underpin the way you want to engage in order to provide clarity about your approach. These principles can be used to explain your decision about the stage in the project you'll start to engage others (e.g. from the start, consult on option, etc).

Some examples from actual engagement processes are:

From Newborough Forest & Warren engagement programme, Countryside Council for Wales/Forestry Commission 2003:

- We will involve stakeholders early on in the process.
- We will respect how stakeholders themselves wish to be involved.
- We will be honest and open and will make every effort to avoid raising false expectations.
- We will be clear about what can and can't be changed. We will also be clear about what can be included during the consultation and if it can't be included we will explain why and try to refer it to someone who can help.
- We will explain that the partnership makes the decisions but takes on board all views and concerns. We will use involvement techniques that encourage all stakeholders to give their views. We will look for value in all contributions.
- We will look for win : win outcomes but recognise that some difficult decisions may need to be made.
- We will provide feedback, including clear explanations on how decisions have been made, why and how concerns have been taken into account.

From Flood Risk in Shaldon Design Workshop, Environment Agency 2005:

- Adopt a precautionary approach: engage as openly, inclusively and early as possible (and reduce intensity later if appropriate)
- Clarify the need (i.e. that flood risk is sufficient to justify action) before moving to consider the range of possible solutions before working up preferred way forward
- The Environment Agency is part of engagement process/decision-making: deliberative approach rather than consultation

4.2 Deciding the phases of your process

This is where you start to sketch out what the overall engagement process will look like. Use the phases set out in the table below as a guide – but it's important to recognise that you might be starting your project (and therefore engagement process) at a different stage (e.g. there is general agreement about the problem and the project is about generating options and solutions).

As you go through the table give a clear purpose for each phase and then think about the kinds of techniques you could use to achieve it (NB it's not about reaching a final decision or getting into the detail). It is important to try to map these phase against a timeline (e.g. to integrate correctly into a legislative process).

Tips

- It can help to give a title or heading to each of the phases (left hand column). This should be specific to your process, and explain the *purpose* of this phase. It should be the kind of language you could put into a press release or use in a presentation explaining your engagement process to stakeholders.
- The right hand column is your second opportunity (the first comes during step 3, stakeholder analysis) to do some broad thinking about 'how' and 'who'. You are not filling in the detail at this stage, just seeing whether obvious, simple answers spring immediately to mind and jotting them down.
- It is useful to do this exercise with at least one other person, using a flip chart sheet for each phase, so you can iterate around the phases, seeing how each impacts on the others.
- Start by filling in your thoughts for the left hand column to get the bare bones of what the process might look like (i.e. the broad purpose of each phase), then move onto the next column to complete the detail (i.e. the kinds of thing you might do to deliver each phase).

Possible Phase – what specifically are you trying to achieve (write it as a complete sentence)?		What kinds of things might you do in this phase and who should be involved?	
1. Understanding and getting buy-in to the issue/need Purpose:	For example, buy-in to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the need that something must change the 'science' or evidence perceptions about the current situation 	Who:	How:
2. Collate the results and publicise (e.g. who needs to know?) Purpose:	Answer any questions, undertake research, advice, fact-finding to reduce any uncertainties that come out of phase 1.	Who:	How:
3. Generate and explore long list of solutions or options Purpose:	For example, this may include the vision or strategic direction	Who:	How:
4. Reduce any uncertainties or fill gaps in information Purpose:	Gather information from specific groups, take people to visit 'other sites', do impact assessments on a number of options, get or clarify resources available.	Who:	How:
5. Evaluate options Purpose:	Once you have all of the option you need to evaluate which is the best option and decide what will go ahead	Who:	How:
6. Communicate decision Purpose:	Explain the choice that has been made against the feedback/input you've had and outline how you have/haven't taken this into account	Who:	How:
7. Implement and review Purpose:	Move into the delivery implementation phase of the project and review against your measures of success	Who:	How:

4.3 Building in the detail - what techniques will you use?

Use the information in this section to start building in the detail around how you'll engage with your stakeholders (i.e. developing the information from the table in the previous section 4.2). It's helpful to think about two distinct (but strongly linked) categories around 'how' to engage. Both can be described as 'techniques', but they are different:

- Structures (or spaces) – where the engagement is ongoing and done through a named group of some kind. They will be aware of or know each other.
- One-off engagement techniques – where stakeholders are brought together once or twice, with no sense of being 'in' a group.

What structures might you want to use to bring stakeholders together?

For most engagement process you will need to establish ongoing structures. Examples of structures include:

Space or group in which involvement can take place	With whom, when and for what
1:1 meetings	With individuals or groups to gather information, establish trust
Partnership or core dialogue group	With key decision-makers, from start of process, sharing decisions
Advisory/steering group	'Involved' stakeholders, early in process, informing decisions
Liaison group	As above, but with specific responsibility for linking to particular interests
Working groups	On specific issues, areas or people (as subset of a liaison group)
Joint fact finding groups (or visits)	To reduce uncertainties (as subset of a liaison group)
Open/invite only forums	At key stages in the project, with wider community and others
Mailing lists	For those expressing an interest, throughout, to keep them updated
Focus group	Selected people/interests, testing values, reactions

What techniques might you want to use with that space or group?

As well as establishing structures, you will need to choose techniques that are appropriate for the tasks, structures, timescale and stakeholders you're going to work with. For example:

Giving information	Getting information from people (individually)	Interactive or deliberative involvement (from people working together)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations at 'their' meeting or group • Exhibitions or road shows • Visits and exchanges • Drop ins • Talks or presentations • Newsletters • Websites • Adverts, posters • Press/media releases • Word of mouth, or peer information networks • Viral methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation documents with request for comments • Questionnaires or flip charts (for example at a drop in, road show or exhibition) • Maps with comment flags (e.g. at exhibition or drop in) • Surveys (door to door, street, telephone, at a particular event) • One: one interviews • Video booths/vox pops • Websites • Use of existing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor made discussions such as at facilitated conferences and workshops, including public meetings • Off the shelf involvement techniques: citizens juries, future search conferences, Open space technology, planning for real, design weekends, citizen summits, • Web based discussion fora • Analytic methods such as multi-criteria mapping • Ongoing in depth dialogue (e.g. using strategic planning techniques)

4.5 Pulling it all together to create an engagement plan and process diagram

In order that you and your stakeholders understand your plan for the engagement process, you need to find a way of representing (in words or in a diagram or table) how your engagement process will work – it's up to you to use a format that works best for you and the situation/project. You may prefer to begin with an Initial Engagement Plan that sets out what the very first steps will be with regards to specific stakeholders (e.g. which groups needs to be engaged in what form by when).

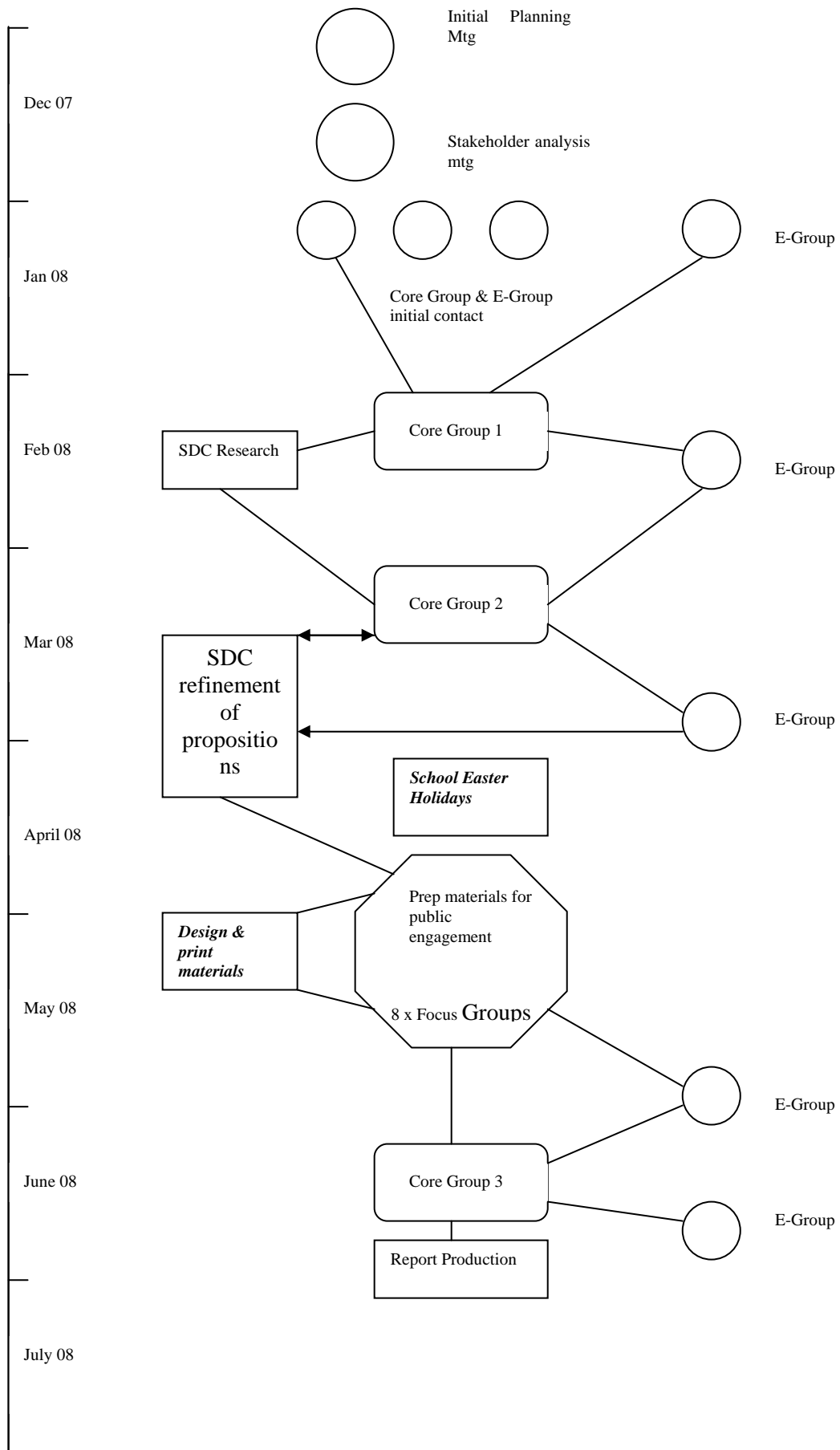
Examples of a process diagram and engagement plan are provided below.

Extract sample INITIAL engagement plan [Sets out what very first steps of engagement will be in relation to named stakeholder groupings]	
Stakeholder - defining characteristics	INITIAL engagement approach
People/organisations, who, once they know about [process], are likely to be interested and heavily involved; may become partners.	Personal contact / phone calls / face to face meetings (this may develop into partnership arrangements or to clear allocation of responsibility within this engagement process.
Statutory agencies and NGO's who need to know early on, but probably won't be very interested unless [option Z] progressed. Would be consulted automatically as part of the statutory consultation process under [legislation/guidance Y]	Letter, inviting two way dialogues. To inform the way the project progresses (this may develop into involvement in a liaison group)
People and groups who might be interested at a later stage [because of x], but at this stage, simply need to be informed and offered an opportunity to engage if they wish to do so	Mail out of letter / invites with comms and media backup. Also use of local and group newsletters, posters etc to 'get the message out'. Must ensure ALL are reached. (those most interested may wish to be involved in a liaison group as the project progresses)

Sample Engagement Plan *[example of one stakeholder within one category]*

Target group	Why you are going to engage with them?	Why they want to be engaged?	What type of engagement do you want to offer them?	What you will do to engage them (methods)?	When you will carry out each method (with dates)?	Who will lead on each task?	How will know when you have done it?
Public sector <i>[Sets out stakeholder groupings within categories - but in way that is relevant to the project - not just for sake of it]</i>							
Shaldon Parish Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We want Parish Councillors to be aware of our view of flood risk To understand their interest in flood risk and the involvement process. Get more names for our stakeholder list Include Councillors' ideas in the involvement plan To get the Parish Council's support, and nominated person on the liaison group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the flood risk issues in the area To share local experience of flooding with the Environment Agency To have a say in any plans to manage flood risk in the area To find out how residents can get involved in the decision-making process 	Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-to-one meeting with Chairman to dispel misconceptions (see minutes of last PC meeting) Visit backed up with something in writing, for example, a handout or briefing note Invite them to the public exhibition, the public meeting and to join the liaison group 	<p>May</p> <p>June</p> <p>June</p> <p>Sept</p>	<p>Area manager</p> <p>Work manager</p> <p>Work manager</p> <p>External relations/ corporate services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They will be aware of our view of flood risk We will understand their interest in flood risk and the local experience / knowledge of local flood issues We will know how they want to be involved They will understand how they can be involved They will have had a chance to provide us with other people to contact They will have had the chance to have a say in the plans

Example Process Diagram – SDC Supplier Obligation Project 2007/2008



Engagement – some terms & definitions

Overview

The world of 'engagement' is littered with words that are laden with significant meaning. Unfortunately, often people use the words and phrases to mean different things.

As all developing professional areas, the language of engagement will undoubtedly continue to develop and expand. The SDC needs to maintain some discipline about the language we use and also develop a habit of challenging others when they use terms that we do not understand, or where they seem to be used in an unfamiliar ways.

For the SDC to be effective when planning and 'doing' engagement, the following things need to be in place as an essential basic building block for any coherent organisational work on engagement:

- We must have agreement on the meaning of any significant phrase or word used to describe what we are intending, proposing or doing
- We must be consistent in our internal and external communications by using the same words to mean the same things

The terms and definitions below are taken from training resources developed for the SDC by Interact Networks.

Engagement

A useful term which can be taken to cover a whole spectrum of activities, as set out in the typology of engagement in the table below. It is useful as a generic term, rather than to describe a more specific type of engagement. All the common terms – consultation, involvement, participation, partnership, are subsets or types of 'engagement'.

Stakeholder

As with 'engagement', we find the most useful way to use this term is as a generic way of referring to anyone who has an interest or 'stake' in the subject or the engagement process under discussion - from interested agencies and organisations, to local communities and individuals.

It can be used with a pre-fix, such "key" or "primary" to describe particularly significant (influential or impacted upon) stakeholders. It is important to note that the term is being used to mean very specific things in some organisations. For example, in the Environment Agency, 'stakeholder' only means 'interested professionals and agencies', as opposed to anyone from 'the public'. This is probably true for most of those working in central government, who tend to consider the public to be distinct from 'stakeholders'.

Public

Used to describe those people and communities who are not (or not yet) directly interested or impacted by the issues being discussed, nor are they satisfactorily represented by any existing stakeholders.

For example, a national issue, such as whether or not to build new nuclear power stations, has many vociferous stakeholders. However, people outside of stakeholder groups and beyond local “nuclear communities” also have a stake although they may, individually, have chosen not to concern themselves with the issue thus far.

Deliberation

This word is often mis-used, in place of ‘dialogue’, but it has a narrower meaning. A simple, practical definition is “to discuss and think through an issue together”. It is often used to suggest a process which seeks to immerse participants in the issues and dilemmas of a topic, to varying degrees, before opinions are expressed.













The term is frequently used to describe specific types of events known as “deliberative forums” where selected citizens are given key facts about a subject and arguments, invited to discuss the issues and then asked to “vote”.

Deliberation - “Discussion and consideration of all sides of an issue.” - Online dictionary

Dialogue

Commonly used to mean a process within which interested parties come together to discuss an issue and develop a common resolution. Often working with a third party facilitator to manage the process of discussion, the work is usually explicitly about maximising common ground, and building consensus.

Dialogue is a process that allows people, usually in small groups, to share their perspectives and experiences with one another about difficult issues...Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust and enables people to be open to perspectives that are very different from their own. Dialogue can, and often does, lead to both personal and collaborative action - National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation. USA. www.thataway.org

Type of engagement	Aim	Typical Methods	Characteristics			
			Response	Power	Frame	Resource
Inform	to provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to help them understand a problem, alternative, opportunities and/or solutions	Letters, legal notices, press/media notices/adverts, verbal announcements, public meetings	REACTIONS 	WITH INITIATOR 	CLOSED 	LESS 
Consult / Info-Gather	to understand stakeholders' views and gain feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	Social / market research, opinion polls, questionnaires, focus group discussions, , citizen panels, citizen juries, online and written consultations	OPINIONS 			
Involve	to work directly with stakeholders to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered throughout the process	Advisory bodies, liaison groups, 1:1 relationships, deliberative workshops, web-based dialogue				
Partnership / Collaborate	to partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision , including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solutions	Citizen advisory committees, Consensus building, Participatory decision-making, partnerships, dialogues				
Empower	to place the final decision -making in the hands of all stakeholders	Citizen juries, ballots, giving grants, providing training and education	NEEDS 	SHARED 	OPEN 	MORE 

* NB the *same* methods may be used for *different* aims depending on the framing of the engagement process