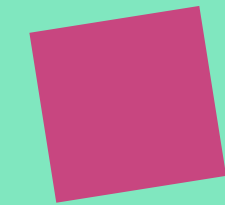
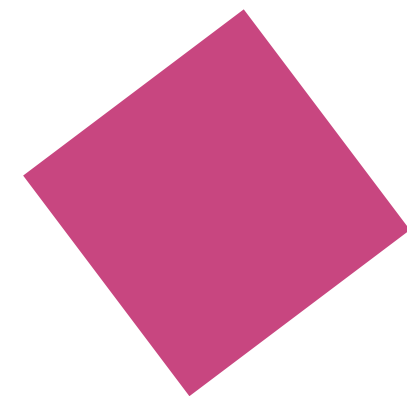


People. Planet.

Positive


Engagement Toolkit






People Positive Engagement toolkit

We believe that better engagement leads to better places and is fundamental to delivering genuine social impact, but one of the biggest barriers is knowing how to do it in a meaningful way. That's why we're sharing this toolkit - originally developed for our internal teams — to support others across the sector.



[Click here to find
our accompanying
People Positive
Engagement Charter](#)



Meaningful, well-planned engagement doesn't always need dedicated resource or significant budgets, and we hope this toolkit helps organisations of all sizes to approach it in a more structured, inclusive and effective way. Importantly, genuine engagement isn't limited to development projects and so this toolkit is designed to support individuals and teams involving communities in a wide range of local initiatives, including:

- Placemaking projects
- Sustainability strategies
- Public art and public realm improvements
- Local events and activities

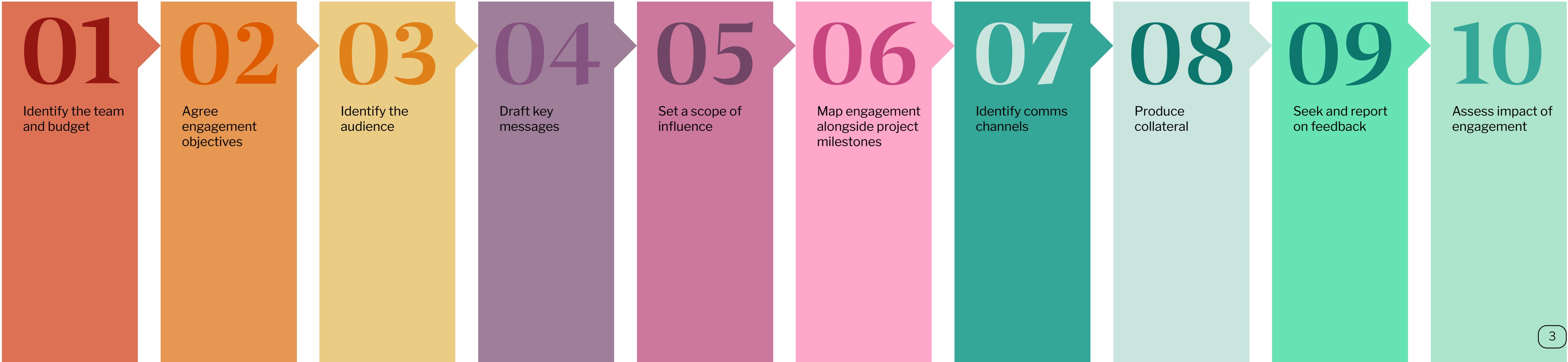
This toolkit is designed as a flexible guide rather than a strict rulebook. Not every project will need every stage or tool, and you should apply it in a way that is proportionate to the size, scale and complexity of your project. We hope it provides a helpful framework to support good judgement, consistency and meaningful engagement.

Communities can also be involved in the design and roll out of the engagement process, from shaping objectives and identifying stakeholders, to co-designing plans, gathering feedback, and evaluating outcomes.

We hope you find this toolkit useful! In the spirit of collaboration and openness, we'd love to hear what you think, how you're using it and if you've got any feedback.

Let us know at:
peoplepositive@grosvenor.com

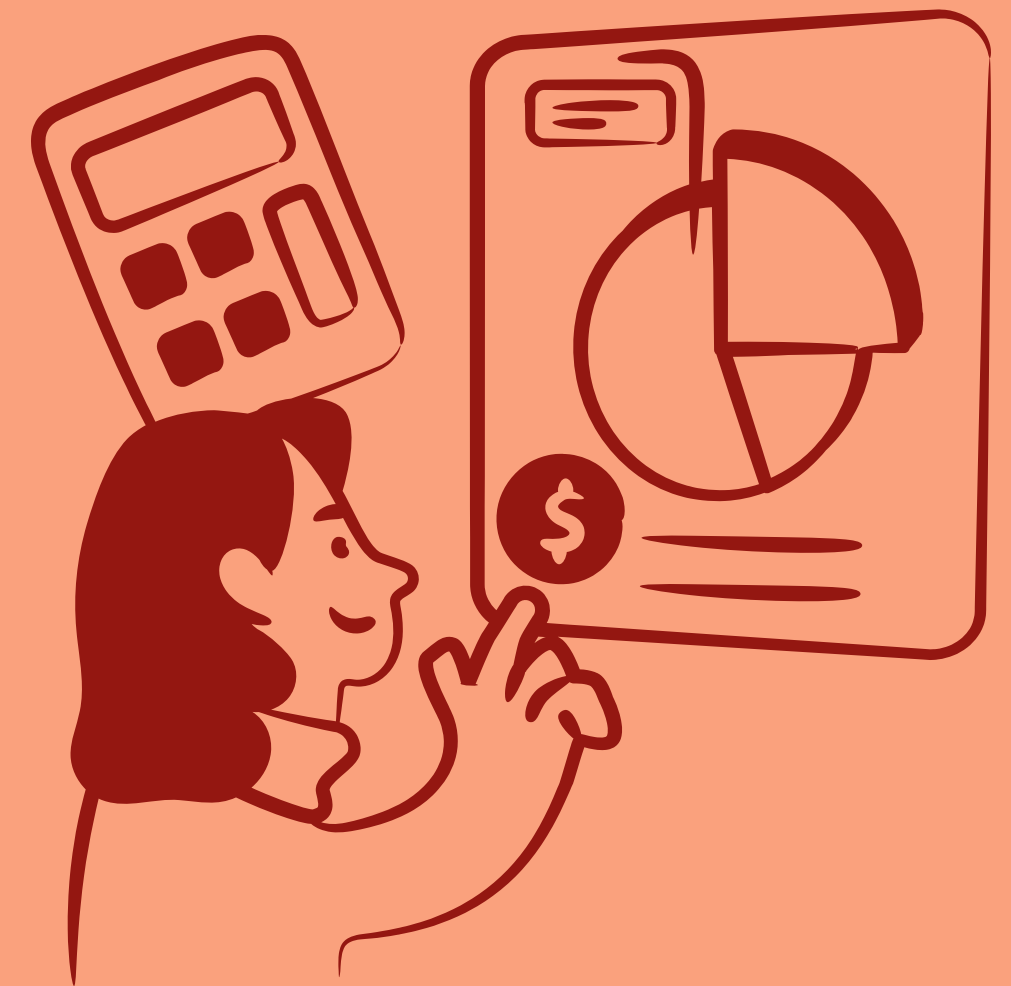
This toolkit includes a 10-step guide to public engagement, covering how to:



STEP 01

Identify the team and budget

It's important to understand who will lead the process and what resources are available. This includes time, budget and the experience or confidence of those in the team.



01

Identify the team and budget

Start by understanding **who will be involved in the process and what resources are available** — including time, skills, and budget. Engagement doesn't always require a big budget, but it does need people who are equipped and supported to do it well and you should plan for potential costs such as letter distribution, workshop materials, incentives or venue hire.

Engagement programmes often requires input from a mix of colleagues and partners, such as communications leads, placemaking or operations teams, external consultants, or political advisors. **Identifying the right people early on helps ensure a joined-up approach** and avoids gaps or duplication. Consider:

- Who is responsible for planning and delivering engagement?
- Are there clear roles and enough capacity across the team?
- Do those involved have the skills needed?
- Would any training or support help improve confidence or outcomes?

Investing in your team through training can make a significant difference to how effective an engagement programme is. Depending on your project, this might include skills in facilitation, youth engagement, or managing challenging conversations. **See some core competencies on the next page** outlining the core behaviours and skills essential for effective engagement and communications.

Core competencies

These core competencies could be used by **leaders and managers** (to set expectations and model good practice), **teams and individuals** (to self-assess strengths and areas for development), **HR** (to inform recruitment, training, and performance conversations) or **consultants** (to align on shared standards and behaviours).



1. Active listening

- Listen to and seeks to understand different perspectives before offering solutions.
- Build genuine relationships by demonstrating empathy and curiosity.
- Accurately anticipate stakeholder concerns and adapts accordingly.
- Advocate the value of listening to diverse voices, including underrepresented groups.



2. Collaborative working

- Identify relevant individuals and groups for collaboration.
- Recognise and works through conflicting and shared interests.
- Encourage open, transparent dialogue to foster consensus.
- Build strong, trust-based relationships across communities and organisations.



3. Facilitation

- Create inclusive spaces where everyone feels able to contribute.
- Actively listen, asks open questions, and reads the room.
- Maintain neutrality, manage group dynamics, and steer conversations productively.
- Synthesise feedback clearly and ensure all voices are heard and respected.



4. Communication

- Communicate clearly and sensitively, tailoring messages to the audience.
- Choose appropriate channels for engagement and ensure accessibility.
- Be transparent about what is possible and what may be constrained.
- Bring narratives to life through compelling rationale.



5. Communication

- Understand when and how to involve communities meaningfully.
- Encourage inclusive participation, such as through co-design or shared decision-making.
- Build comfort and confidence in community-led processes.
- Advocate for the impact of engagement to be visible and valued in outcomes



6. Identifying need

- Invest time in learning about the local area and communities.
- Reflect local lived experiences, with particular attention to those most in need.
- Use this data and local insight to inform engagement strategies and objectives of placemaking or place management projects.
- Ensure engagement responds to identified needs and priorities, not assumptions.



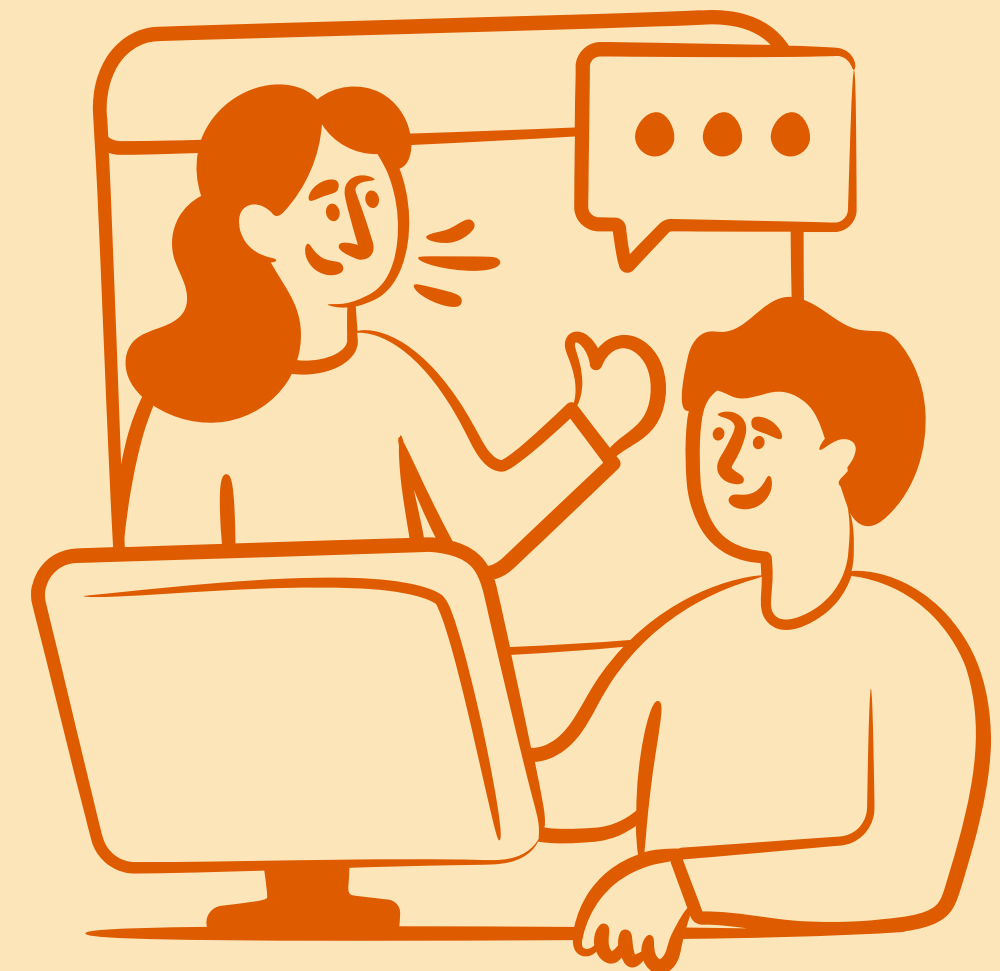
7. Understanding good practice

- Keep up to date with evolving best practice
- Share examples and learning openly with colleagues, peers and partners.
- Champion good practice as a key driver of delivering positive local impact.
- Recognise when existing approaches fall short and seek to improve them.

STEP 02

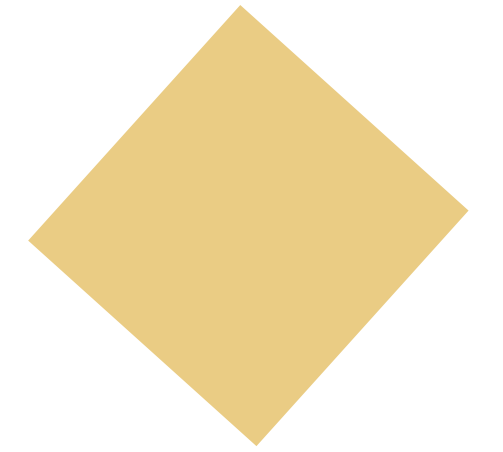
Agree engagement objectives

Setting objectives at the start ensures everyone is on the same page about the requirements and scale of the engagement programme.



02

Agree engagement objectives



Agreeing objectives as a team early on **helps keep everyone accountable**, and you should revisit them at key stages to make sure you're delivering on them.

Familiarise yourself with what the local authority recommend or is required. For example, larger developments projects that require a planning application may need to prepare the following documents:

- **Equality Impact Assessment** to ensure engagement plans reflect and respond to equality and inclusion priorities.
- **Statement of Community Involvement** which documents the engagement process, feedback received and how this has shaped proposals, as well as an overview of ongoing community involvement.

It is worth remembering that this is not just about doing what you are told to, but also that involving communities is **genuinely helpful to your decision making and helps make better places**.

Potential objectives:

- Build trust with local communities by demonstrating openness and transparency throughout the process.
- Ensure underrepresented groups feel heard and considered in decision-making.
- Strengthen relationships with local organisations or networks to support long-term stewardship.
- Generate excitement and interest around the project
- Identify concerns early and respond to them proactively.
- Create a shared sense of ownership and pride in the project.
- Ensure feedback gathered can be meaningfully analysed and reported back.
- Identify and mitigate challenges such as consultation fatigue or conflicting local activities
- Meet statutory or policy requirements for consultation in a way that adds value rather than ticks a box.
- Support delivery of wider social, environmental or placemaking goals.
- Give communities a genuine opportunity to influence
- Ensure all engagement activity can be clearly documented and evaluated, particularly where a Statement of Community Involvement is required

STEP 03

Identify the audience and their priorities

There is no one 'community' and so understanding the demographic make-up of an area is crucial, particularly if the project is going to impact some groups more than others. Remember 'community' doesn't mean just residents, you should also consider existing or potential businesses, workers and visitors.



03

Identify the audience and their priorities

Who could be affected (positively or negatively) by your plans? And who can influence the success or failure of your project? This is all in addition to the local authority and other statutory consultees that need to be involved in the process.

We would recommend that a project owner works closely with a colleague that already has experience and knowledge of the local area and seeks input from community stakeholders to help spot gaps and flag potential issues.

They could also help you categorise people that need 1:1 engagement and **face to face meetings (which are always better than a cold email)** compared with those that need to be informed but don't require as close communication.

As well as updating key stakeholders and local groups, it's important to let wider neighbours know about your plans or project, **a printed letter drop is once way you could do this**, ahead of or in addition to any wider communication channels you have.



Q: What if my project requires a planning application?

A: There are several factors that influence how the Local Authority (LA) need to notify people about a planning application, including if it requires an Environmental Impact Assessment application or is classified as a 'major project'.

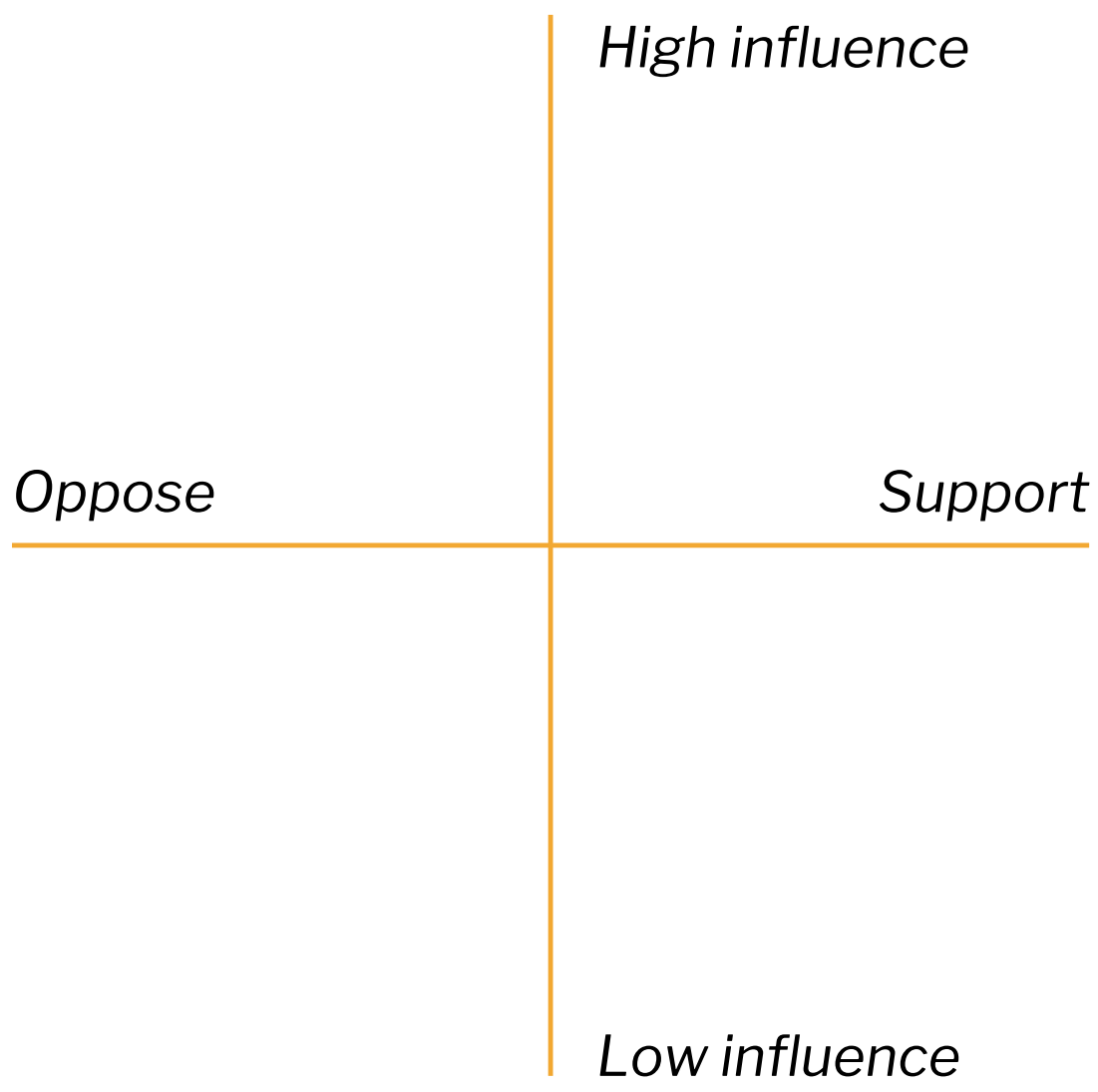
For smaller applications the LA may erect a site notice and publish details about the application on their website, rather than send a letter to neighbouring properties.

Ultimately, **people should hear about your projects from you** and so it is recommended to notify neighbours before or alongside submitting an application.

- Schools & youth groups
- Local businesses & workforce
- Other community orgs
- Statutory stakeholders
- Resident or amenity groups
- Political groups or stakeholders
- Faith groups

Make sure you're considering **all potentially interested groups** starting with the above at a minimum. It's important to **go beyond the known voices** and identify people you might not hold a relationship with but who still need to know about any changes you're proposing, or who could provide valuable insight to help shape your plans.

Power mapping diagram



Acknowledge that different groups and stakeholders hold varying degrees of influence. Consider tools like 'power mapping' to understand these dynamics and actively explore opportunities to redistribute decision-making power where appropriate. This usually involves creating a visual grid that plots stakeholders based on level of influence/power (high -> low) and level of interest or alignment (supportive -> opposed). This makes it easier to see where decision-making power really sits and by surfacing the imbalances, you can deliberately create space for underrepresented voices.

Alongside mapping who to contact, you should consider what matters most to the people you're engaging. Local needs will differ by area and audience - from concerns about safety and green space, to aspirations around local amenities or youth provision. Understanding these needs can help shape not only **who you engage**, but **how and when**, and ensures your materials speak to **local priorities** rather than generic messages.

Use insight from previous engagement, local authority data, or community partners to tailor your approach. If you're unsure, a short pre-engagement survey or informal conversation with trusted local groups can offer valuable direction early on. Read more about our approach to identify local needs [here](#).

STEP 04

Draft key messages

Being clear on the project ambition helps keep messaging consistent when communicating with different people, and in turn ensures there is consistent understanding of the proposals.



04

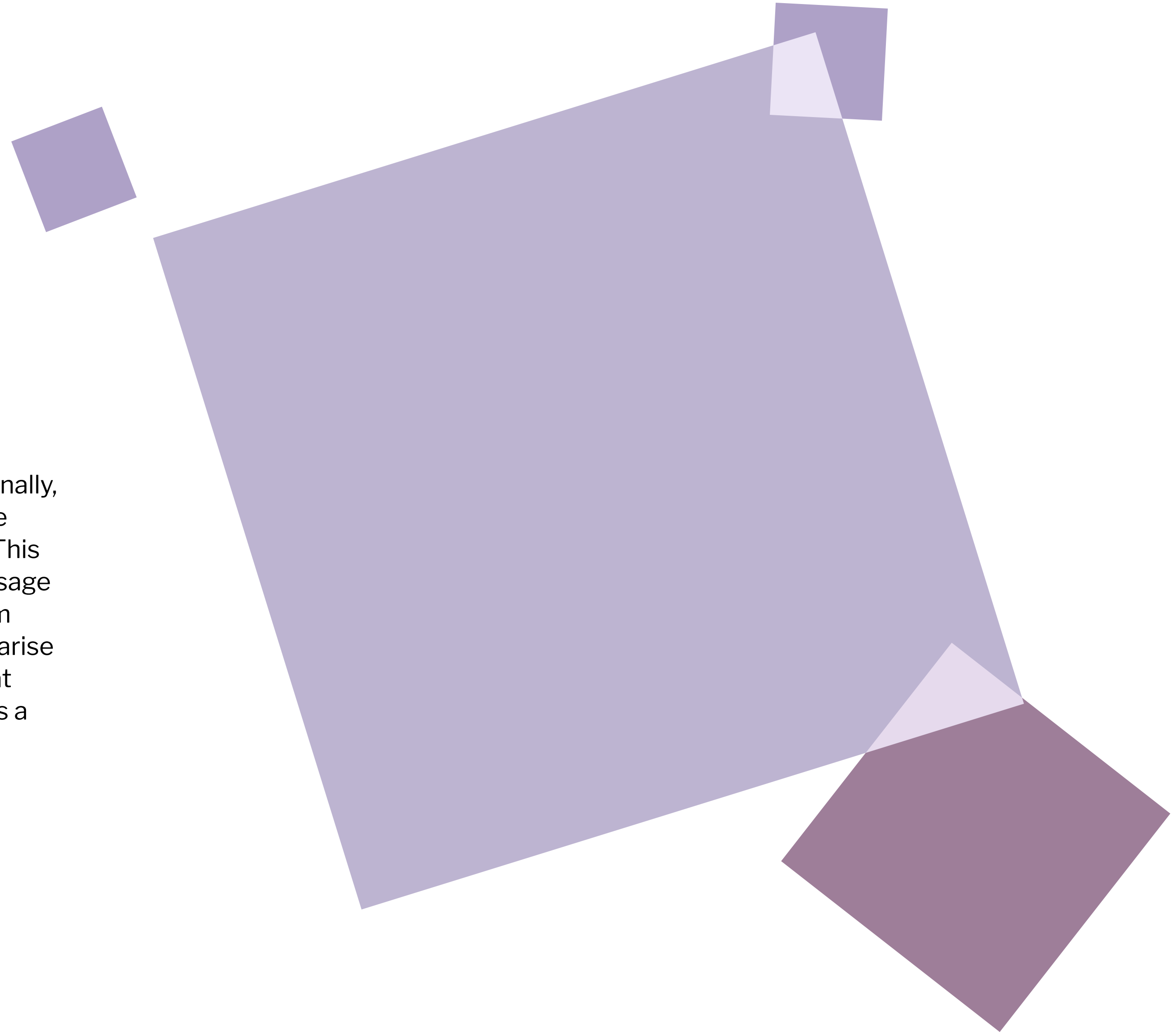
Draft key messages

It's important to clearly communicate what the proposals entail and why they are proposed. This could cover **social and environmental benefits**, as well referencing other initiatives or local priorities your project is aligned with.

Consider how messaging will be received by communities and **try putting yourself in their shoes** – what areas will they be particularly interested in? What steps will you take to minimise any impact? Is it clear who they should contact if they have questions?

Some topics will be more important or interesting to specific groups than others and it's okay to **dial up or down elements** of the project depending on who you are talking.

Before sharing any communication externally, it can be helpful to test it with a colleague who isn't closely involved in the project. This is a quick way to check whether the message is clear, easy to understand, and free from assumptions or jargon. If they can summarise the key points back to you and know what action (if any) they're expected to take it's a good sign the communication is ready to go.



Communication principles



1. Clear and concise

Use plain, accessible language. Avoid jargon and provide sufficient information needed to support understanding and informed involvement.



2. Respectful

Maintain professionalism and courtesy in interactions, including during challenging or sensitive conversations. Create space for constructive dialogue and acknowledge different perspectives.



3. Accountable

Be honest about responsibilities, limitations, and outcomes. Where mistakes occur, acknowledge them openly, provide a clear explanation, and outline any corrective action taken.



4. Accurate

Ensure information is factually correct, relevant, and up to date. Respond to questions and enquiries, avoiding partial answers or the omission of important details.



5. Consistent

Maintain consistency in language, tone, and visual identity across all materials and platforms. Use design elements (e.g. layout, colour, typeface) to make communications engaging and easy to navigate.



6. Timely

Provide information and responses in a timely manner, in line with agreed timeframes or regulatory requirements. Communicate clearly if delays or changes arise.



7. Inclusive and accessible

Offer multiple channels and formats to reach diverse audiences. Use clear, non-technical language where possible, and design communications to be accessible to all, including those with limited digital access or additional needs.

STEP 05

Set a scope of influence

It is important to be clear and open about the opportunity for communities to influence the project. This will help you effectively manage expectations and create a clear structure for the programme.



05

Set a scope of influence

You can meaningfully involve communities whilst managing expectations by **setting a scope of influence early in the process**. This is most successful when relevant people working on the project (including external representatives such as event partners or the design team) contribute to the discussion. By doing this you can make sure everyone's on the same page about what is or isn't ripe for engagement.

1. Begin by identifying themes or topics that are relevant to the project e.g. the layout of a space, materials or finishes, operator type, opening hours or programming etc.

2. Take each of the themes in turn and ask questions about the level of influence people have, and why, and any external factors.

- Are there fixed parameters or targets you want or need to meet?
- Are there policy requirements that mean the solution is already determined?

When a decision has already been made or is outside of your control, always explain why. Transparency builds trust, even if the answer is "no." If there are elements that are flexible, be clear about where and how people can influence them.

3. Once assessed, populate a simple matrix or traffic light system that shows the level of influence (high, medium or low) for each theme.

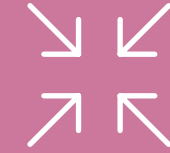
When setting the scope of influence, it is helpful to recognise the different levels of participation available to communities. The 'Ladder of Participation' is a well-recognised model that illustrates the different ways communities can be involved in decision-making ranging from simply being informed, to being fully empowered to make them.

Not every project can reach the top of the ladder but being transparent about where you are on it – and ensuring all team members are on the same place - helps to set expectations and avoid the risk of over promising or under delivering.



Inform

Provide clear, accessible information so communities understand what is happening.



Collaborate

Partner with communities in each aspect of the process and decision making, from identifying options to developing preferred solutions.



Consult

Invite feedback and views from communities while being clear about what is or isn't being consulted on and how final decisions are made.



Involve

Work closely with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure local priorities and range of perspectives are consistently understood and considered.



Empower

Placing decision-making in the hands of the community, giving them genuine influence and control over outcomes.

STEP 06

Map engagement alongside project milestones

Structuring the engagement phases around key project milestones means you can offer genuine choices at the appropriate time, and hopefully end up with a better outcome as a result.



06

Map engagement phases alongside project milestones

You can ensure the engagement is both meaningful and useful by **matching areas with a medium/high scope of influence to relevant points** in the design or planning programme. Testing this plan with your wider team (or planning consultants, if relevant) is a good way to make sure it is **aligned with other workstreams** or deadlines.

Where appropriate and possible you should test proposals with key stakeholders ahead of finalising them or submitting an application. As well as the scope of influence, how you're going to engage at each stage is also influenced by the:

- Scale, complexity or sensitivity of the project
- Who you want/need to reach
- Level of detail you're sharing

You also need to **give sufficient time for people to participate**. Larger projects are likely to have a longer lead-in time, but there are minimum meaningful durations that smaller projects should plan for too. Ensure you adjust timings according to the scale of project, the sensitives involved, and practicalities such as school holidays. **Consider the wider engagement landscape** too — are other consultations or large projects happening locally that may overlap or create fatigue?

STEP 07

Identify communication channels

Establishing a two-way dialogue with communities is one way you can open up and make it easier for more people to get involved.



07

Identify communication channels

It often works well to **identify one point of contact** who is comfortable sharing their contact details and therefore able to respond to questions about the project. On smaller projects, it might be appropriate for communications to come from a representative that communities already know.

Arrange to meet people in person is best if you anticipate a lot of interest or questions about the project. This will help you better understand any concerns and avoid back-and-forth emails.

You can reach more people (and avoid overwhelming communities with multiple letters or emails) by **coordinating news and updates** wherever possible. Do you have an existing digital platform or newsletter that you can include updates in?

Don't forget your internal audience! Keeping colleagues informed about upcoming engagement activity builds support, reduces duplication, and ensures consistent messaging, especially when teams may be asked questions by stakeholders, neighbours, or customers.

Why internal communication matters

- Helps colleagues speak confidently about the project if asked
- Ensures teams aren't surprised by public activity e.g. consultation events, signage, local press
- Builds internal advocacy and shared ownership of engagement goals
- Encourages cross-team collaboration e.g. between operations, marketing or development

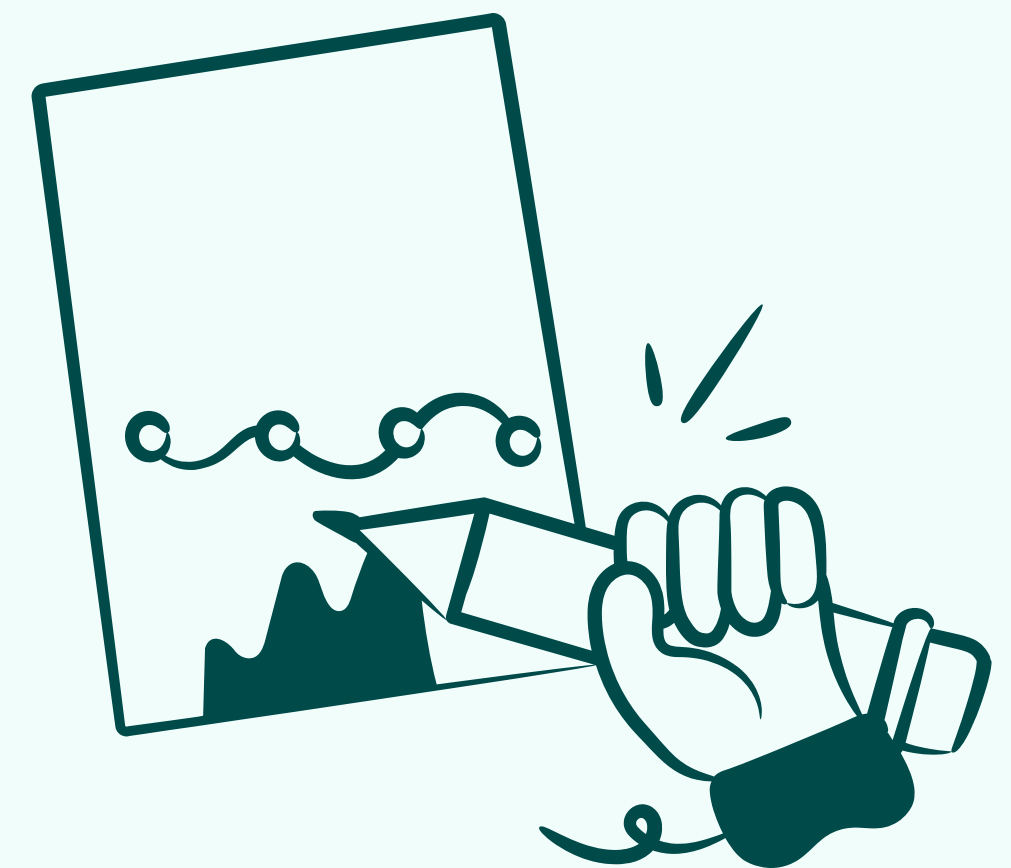
What to include in internal updates

- A summary of what the project is and why it matters
- Key dates and engagement milestones
- Who the main point of contact is
- Key messages or FAQs staff should be aware of
- Opportunities to get involved or support the engagement

STEP 08

Produce collateral

Designing communication materials in line with a clear and consistent visual identity helps ensure messages are delivered in a professional, engaging and recognisable way.



08

Produce collateral

A **clear and consistent brand identity** - including elements such as logo, colour palette, typeface, imagery and tone of voice - helps you communicate effectively and professionally.

Strong design supports clarity, builds trust with audiences, and can encourage greater interest and participation from the community. As well as making materials instantly recognisable to local communities and stakeholders, a **cohesive visual approach helps align materials with the project's values** and wider goals.

For some projects, you might also need to **align with wider branding** that already exists. Check whether there are brand guidelines that should be followed to ensure materials are consistent, accessible, and aligned with the vision or identity for the area.

STEP 09

Seek and report on feedback

It is good practice to report back on what was heard during engagement, and to explain how that input has influenced decisions. This helps build trust by showing communities you value their input and are listening to what they told you.



09

Seek and report on feedback

There are a range of ways to assess how effective an engagement process has been, depending on the scale and nature of the project. This might include participant feedback, surveys, informal conversations, or reviewing levels of participation at different stages.

To avoid overwhelming people with repeated requests, it's helpful to time feedback opportunities around key project milestones when input is most meaningful, and the process feels joined up. Suitable moments to invite feedback might include:

- After an event such as a workshop, drop-in session or project meeting
- When sharing or testing draft proposals
- As part of a project update or newsletter
- Following completion of works on site

After collecting feedback, it is tempting to jump into implementing a solution without following up with people. By **closing the loop** and telling communities how their input has influenced your thinking - or when you can't implement feedback, explaining why - you can demonstrate a transparent process and hopefully encourage others to share feedback with you in future.

Digital tools to gather feedback

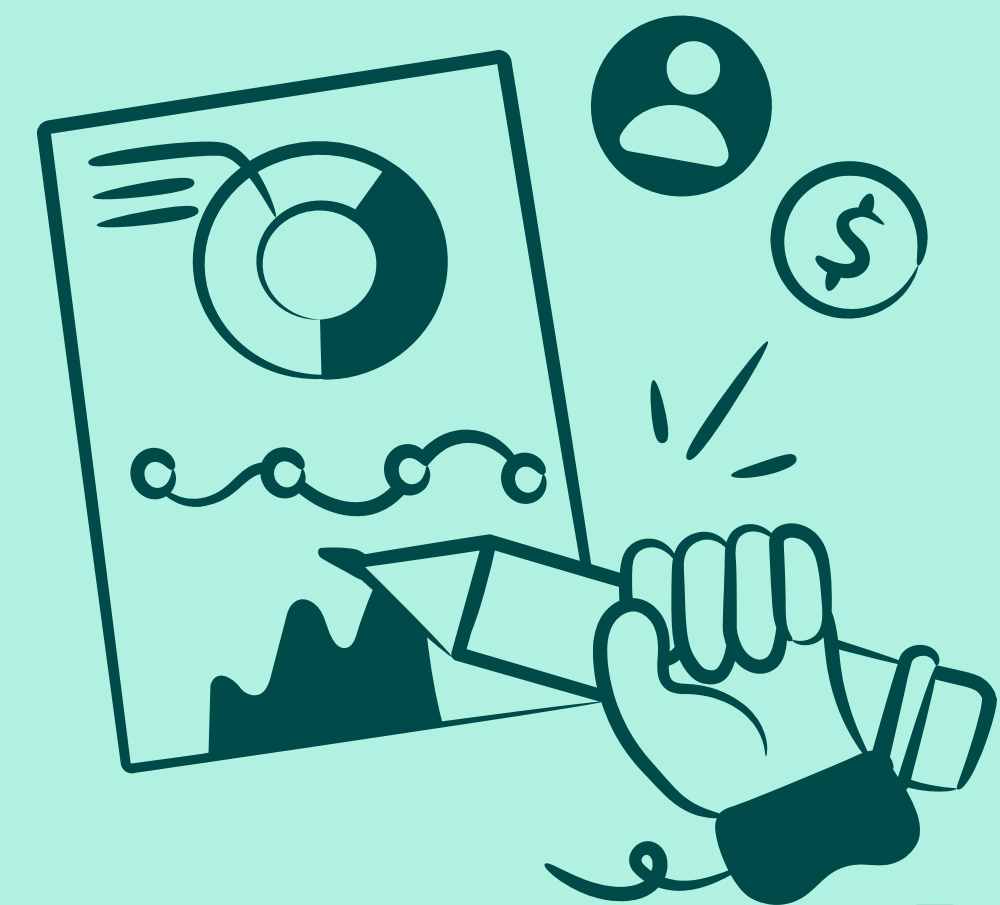
Digital platforms such as Commonplace can be useful tools for gathering feedback and broadening participation. Commonplace includes feature like interactive maps, comment functions and data analysis tools to help capture and understand a range of community views.

Using a single, consistent platform can also make it easier for participants, reducing the need to repeatedly submit demographic information. It also allows for more joined-up analysis across different engagement activities or locations, but make sure you always consider offline alternatives to ensure an inclusive approach.

STEP 10

Assess impact of engagement

Evaluation is not the end of the process, but part of the ongoing cycle of engagement. Assessing impact helps you understand what worked, where improvements can be made, and how communities can continue to be engaged meaningfully.



10

Assess impact of engagement

A useful starting point is to return to the objectives agreed at Step 2. Has the process delivered on what was originally intended, and why might some goals have been achieved more fully than others?

From there, you might find it helpful to think about indicators of success and communities themselves can also help define what success looks like locally. These could include:

- Quantitative measures e.g. number of participants, diversity of demographic groups reached, levels of repeat engagement, positive feedback received.
- Qualitative measures e.g. new relationships or networks formed, shifts in trust or perceptions, or stories of individual or community impact.

For some projects, short surveys can provide sufficient insights, for others, interviews, focus groups, or reflective workshops may offer a deeper understanding. Community representatives could also help interpret the findings or provide their take on things, ensuring the analysis is not wholly organisation led.

You may wish to share lessons internally to refine your approach and support wider colleagues and externally to build transparency and trust.

Assessment should not be seen as a one-off report. What you learn at this stage should inform how you continue to engage: refreshing objectives, adapting methods, and strengthening relationships so that future activity is even more meaningful.



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