

STEP 6

KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED

This guide describes some of the methods to use in carrying out meaningful ongoing community consultation.



THE STEERING GROUP CAN BECOME VERY BUSY CARRYING OUT OPTIONS APPRAISALS, FEASIBILITY AND BUSINESS PLANNING WORK, AS WELL AS ONGOING LIAISON WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS.

IT IS VALUABLE TO TAKE STOCK AND ENSURE THE COMMUNITY REMAINS ENGAGED AND INFORMED BEFORE TOO MUCH TIME AND PROGRESS SLIPS BY.

WHY AND WHEN YOU SHOULD CARRY OUT FURTHER CONSULTATION?

Reaching a key planning milestone such as receiving a feasibility study, business plan or scale model for the proposal is often a good opportunity to undertake further, more precise consultation and is valuable for various reasons:

- to inform and engage the community with progress so far
- to re-establish interest and support from the community
- to refine ideas with further suggestions
- as a method of membership and board recruitment, building on the momentum and dealing with skills gaps that may have emerged during the work to date.

HOW WELL HAVE YOU ENGAGED WITH THE COMMUNITY ALREADY?

It is important to look at who has already engaged with you, and also who hasn't. Consider making the ongoing community engagement more appealing to harder to reach parts of your community.

- are there any notable gaps in engagement?
- have you included young people in your plans?

WHAT METHODS CAN YOU USE?

It is important to make this stage different from earlier consultation and communication with the community (see 'Early community engagement'), so that they can see progress being made and don't feel that they are being asked the same thing all the time. Make very clear where you have listened to suggestions from the wider community to help build trust in your group.

If you have a scale model or other visual representation of the building or site this can generate a lot of interest. You may have to emphasise that what is shown is merely a representation and a prompt for discussion, not the final proposal.

Events at this stage could include:

- A public meeting to disseminate results so far
- An open day/exhibition/roadshow with any visual materials available
- Focus groups or presentations to pre-existing groups within the community, particularly if they have requested this in an earlier phase of consultation.

Receiving comments on post-its during or after the session may make it easier for some to have their say. Leaving the materials somewhere accessible but safe for a limited time will allow people to consider the proposals at their leisure. You could leave a suggestions box alongside it and/or have the display manned by a steering group volunteer to continue dialogue with interested members of the community.

WHAT TYPES OF QUESTIONS ARE YOU LOOKING TO ADDRESS AT THIS POINT?

This stage helps to inform more detailed planning for the operation of your project. Formal questionnaires could also be available or circulated to households covering more detail about anticipated usage of the facility such as:

- Information on how often and at what times of the day/week people expect to use any of the services/facilities proposed
- Their willingness to pay for certain facilities
- Any additional services or facilities that people would like to see
- How they would rank their preferences of the options available

HOW WILL YOU USE THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED AT THIS STAGE?

This information will help to inform the business plan and contribute to a realistic assessment of viability of the proposals. This will be vital to ensure ongoing community support and to inform robust funding applications.

CAN YOU BE CREATIVE ABOUT INVOLVING THE WHOLE COMMUNITY?

Make sure you remember to reach people in the community who may not find it easy to access or respond to the plans. It is important to be creative in making efforts to go to the community. You could take a display or roadshow to care homes or day centres, or link with youth groups to run the consultation jointly as a filming/art/heritage project.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE SEE

www.hie.co.uk/ten-steps

or contact us on community.assets@hient.co.uk

