

STAKEHOLDER PULL-OUT

WHY ENGAGE

Local Economic Development is by nature, people-centred and community-led. Since it is a participatory, community-driven process, diverse stakeholder input and involvement is necessary to the success of any LED process or plan. It is important to provide the opportunity for input from diverse segments of the community, using methods that are appropriate and effective. This can be challenging. This overview will provide some ideas for engaging with groups that may not typically be included in the engagement process.

WHO TO ENGAGE

Groups that may be under-represented in engagement processes include:

1. Young professionals
2. Seniors
3. Youth
4. First Nations
5. Newcomers

Who else in your community may not be typically represented in planning or consultation? Are there any other voices or perspectives that may add value to any stage of the process? Other groups you may want to consider are: the impoverished or homeless, stay-at-home parents, commuters.

HOW TO ENGAGE

In designing an engagement/public involvement plan, consider the unique needs, lifestyles and skills of the groups you are trying to reach. All engagement requires drawing on different methods and styles of outreach depending on, not only on the groups you wish to engage, but also the depth in which you wish to engage a group, and the information you wish to gather. The following are tips to consider when designing your engagement:

Connect with existing channels and resources. Consider the important places and resources for those you are looking to engage. Work with existing groups. Hold engagement sessions at locations that are familiar and convenient that will make participation more comfortable and accessible.

Consult before engaging. Consider discussing the best means for engagement with representatives or leaders of the different groups you wish to engage. For example, you might want to ask about the most effective engagement methods, the most convenient locations, common barriers to participation as well as how to address them.



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Ensure pathways for meaningful and authentic engagement. Consider how to demonstrate the impact different groups' participation and input will have on your planning process. Transparency is key to showing people their involvement is valued and useful. On the other hand, tokenism and people feeling unheard can lead to distrust and disillusionment with LED planning and other planning processes.

Be flexible. Consider how you can plan your engagement to support and suit the schedules and lifestyles of the groups you wish to engage (e.g. work schedules, transportation needs, family life, etc.). In some cases, informal outreach may be the best method to involve those who are not likely/able to attend a scheduled open house.

FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALES

- Consider holding engagement sessions at existing meetups, events, incubators, support programs and popular restaurants and bars
- Incorporate networking opportunities in your engagement event
- Use branding to ensure your LED process is recognizable
- Utilize online technology and social media to encourage participation and gather feedback and ensure your engagement process is suitable for mobile use and viewing
- Keep the requirements of engagement short to ensure that young professionals can engage easily and quickly

FOR SENIORS

- Consider holding engagement at seniors centres, service clubs, faith organizations and recreation facilities
- Consider the technology literacy of seniors. Some seniors are not comfortable using online devices so you will want to have print materials. On the other hand, an increasing number of seniors are accessing information online and will want to engage using computers, phones and tablets.
- Consider age related physical changes (e.g. mobility, eyesight, hearing loss) and how your engagement methods can be adapted to suit challenges



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FOR YOUTH

- Consider holding engagement at schools and universities, youth centres and other youth program locations
- Effectively utilize common social media challenges to encourage participation and/or gather input (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and blogs)
- Again, keep the requirements of engagement short so that youth can engage easily and quickly but also have options for deeper levels of engagement
- Consider training youth to be facilitators or involving youth in organizing and committee roles

FOR FIRST NATIONS

- Consider relationship building before jumping into engagement. There is often a lack of communication between First Nations and non-First groups and historical issues and past injustices may need to be addressed before meaningful engagement can be conducted.
- Consider face to face, one-on-one and small group engagement
- Consider holding engagement at First Nations' administration or community facilities
- Involve community leaders and elders at all stages of the planning process
- Include in core project team if possible

FOR NEWCOMERS

- Consider holding engagement at social service and settlement organizations, community centres and faith organizations
- Be mindful of cultural and religious practices when planning engagement sessions
- Consider potential language barriers and if translation services and translated materials will be needed
- Consider providing childcare or letting parents know children are welcome

