Community Engagement Methods and Techniques

Public Meetings

Public meetings provide an opportunity to consult large numbers of people. Meetings can be organised to allow for small group discussions with oral feedback. This provides an opportunity for bringing the community together to set the agenda. Small groups are an important element of public meetings to engage people effectively, taking into account the need to include everyone and different levels of confidence.

Art and Creativity

Some forms of community engagement are particularly good at encouraging participation and generating interest and ideas. These include:

• **Photography**: encouraging people of all ages to capture their likes and dislikes in an area. The results can be exhibited to generate further discussion or to promote additional events.

• **Video Format**: short, snappy interviews with people in different locations and at different times (similar to radio or television). Like photographs the results can be edited, displayed and discussed more widely.

• **Songs, poems, artwork:** invite people to submit (possibly for a prize) a song, poem or art piece which describes their area, changes they would like to see, their ideal home or environment.

• **Blank canvas**: Encouraging people to draw the things that are important to their community (this approach can work using paper table covers, large sheets of a wall, or creating a mosaic of small pictures).

Street Stalls

Street Stalls consist of displays in a prominent central space in the community or at a popular community event. These displays can include idea or graffiti walls which can be used to capture the views and comments of large numbers of people. Maps and plans for an area or project can be displayed and passer-bys asked to comment on particular issues and themes, generate ideas or vote for particular activities or facilities. It is also possible to gather feedback using comments box (which provides an opportunity for people to comment anonymously).

Community Mapping

Maps and photographs of an area or specific location are used to illustrate how people view their area: what they like or dislike or improvements they would like to see. Ideas are generated in small group discussions and recorded on 'post-its'or pre-prepared cards. Discussions should be facilitated to help people explore issues, build consensus or identify areas of conflict.

Workshops and Focus Groups

Workshops and focus groups allow people to discuss their ideas in an open and relaxed atmosphere. Workshops can take a variety of formats. They can be designed to exchange information; to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an idea or project; to obtain ideas and innovative thinking for a way forward for a project; or they can be specifically geared towards prioritisation and the production of an action plan. Focus groups by contrast are designed to specifically concentrate on a single issue or a programme of topics.

Web-based Engagement

There are a variety of web based engagement processes to choose from; online surveys (eg survey monkey) and social networking (e.g. Facebook) to promote surveys and events.

Information gathered from:
https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf