

Identifying Needs and Opportunities

Inclusivity

Inclusivity is an important factor in creating collective agreement over your plan. See the Community Engagement chapter for more detail.

This is closely related to the engagement section because with good engagement, people are more willing and able to take part in decisions about identifying needs and aspirations as well as taking forward future actions to address needs and aspirations identified.

Thoughtful engagement across the community is important to create a meaningful plan, which empowers, and attracts participation from local residents.

An inclusive approach should be considerate of everyone in your community, this requires an ability to reach out to those less able to engage and to listen to the range of views and perspectives. This will allow a wide range of input to addressing to your community's needs and challenges, as well as identifying opportunities and working collectively to deliver any plans in a way that provides creative solutions which include everyone.

An inclusive approach can also be used when considering problem-solving options using social enterprise. Social enterprise can provide an opportunity for those disadvantaged in the community to take an active role in delivering solutions, for example through supported employment or as active volunteers.

Many social enterprises have an employability element providing opportunities for people who may face barriers to employment and are often excluded from traditional employment models but can be included as part of the wider community benefit from the enterprise activity.

Responding to a pre-determined need or opportunity that provides a focal point

It is often the case that communities will come together when a specific challenge or opportunity presents itself (for example the threatened loss of an important service, or the presentation of an opportunity to generate income for community benefit through a local asset - such as renewables).

In this case the 'what' is already identified. It is important to then consider options for enterprising solutions. The Enterprise Assessment Tool provides an opportunity to review the issue or opportunity and consider options to develop social enterprise approaches as a response.

[Access the Enterprise Assessment Tool here](#)

The focus of any engagement should then be to develop a plan in order to address the need or respond to the opportunity.

Identifying Needs and Opportunities

Identifying needs and opportunities is an important first stage in bringing together a plan if there is not already a pre-determined focal point.

Gathering feedback on issues and opportunities can be done in a number of ways. A community survey is an effective method of gathering a range of ideas and perspectives. This provides a framework allowing the wider community to feed in their priority needs and aspirations.

With continued collective community engagement, people taking part can be given a voice about how they wish the information gathering to be carried out.

When approaching your needs and aspirations, it is important to consider how social enterprise solutions may be developed to address these. Encouraging a focus on this aspect from an early stage can help stimulate ideas and identify assets, which may not otherwise have been recognised.

The [community toolkit](#) provides an overview of thinking about the types of questions to ask and different methods of asking.

Collectively develop a research plan and question - what, why, and who it might involve - what is available both structurally and people, making use of available skills/expertise within the community. [Read more about the background to community-led action research.](#)

Survey Methods of Gathering Feedback

Community surveys provide an opportunity to gather feedback from a broad range of individuals across the wider community. Ensuring those with barriers such as literacy or access are able to provide their input will require additional focus.

[The community toolkit resource](#) also provides a template for a community questionnaire.

It can be of benefit to add a specific question asking for ideas for enterprise opportunities that could be developed to provide income for community benefit, to see what ideas come to light.

Digital survey tools such as 'Survey Monkey' can also be useful in reaching a broad range of stakeholders, it is important to consider digital access and confidence and provide an alternative option for people who would not be comfortable providing their input online.

Survey Monkey and its equivalent tools also provide the opportunity to produce survey analysis, including graphs or tables, so can be of value to add to the additional information gathered in hard copy format.

[The Glenbarr Community Investment Survey](#) provides an example of a more open question approach - “identify priorities for enterprise”. The open ended questions allow people space to write down all of their thoughts, feelings, and visions down onto paper, and to have them included in the results.

This format can also be of value to stimulate ideas for social enterprise locally. Here is a link to a template survey for [“Ideas for Enterprise for Community Benefit”](#)

Focus Groups for Gathering Feedback

Running a focus group can provide an opportunity for a more detailed discussion around particular issues or aspirations. They are particularly good for exploring questions in more depth, and people’s ideas can build on and challenge one another’s. A focus group can also provide an opportunity to discuss some findings that have already been gathered via a community survey or to explore specific ideas.

[This resource](#) provides a fact sheet on running a focus group.

There are also a number of other methods for gathering feedback, which are presented in the Community Engagement Resource. These include useful tools such as:

- Public Meetings
- Art and Creativity (Photography, Video Format, Songs, poems, artwork , Blank Canvas)
- Street Stalls
- Community Mapping
- Workshops and Focus Groups
- Web-based Engagement

Read our guide to [Community Engagement Methods and Techniques here](#).

Case Studies

- [Ross of Mull and Iona Community Plan](#) (*written in English*)
 - A case study for good practice which uses community engagement to identify and prioritise local issues and create a community action plan.
 - Identifies the community research methods and processes used: Survey, focus groups, open public discussion, visit to local groups and households.
 - Focus on community participation that is thoroughly inclusive and accessible for community members residing in extremely remote and rural areas.
 - General needs identified and then further needs within this surveyed again to ensure effective action.

- [Glenbarr Investment Plan Film](#) (*written in English*)
- [Glenbarr Community Investment Plan](#) (*written in English*)
- [Glenbarr Householder Survey](#) (*written in English*)
 - These are examples of good practice, illustrated through a film and community investment plan, accompanied by a community survey template.

- [COMCOT - An Innovative Tool for Improving the Competitiveness of Community-Based Tourism](#) (*written in English*)
 - Good practice example for identifying and prioritising community needs.
 - Consultation with local project participants to identify issues within relevant communities through discussion both formally (planned meetings) and informally (unplanned social meetings).
 - Undertaking supplementary research within businesses, communities, and within local markets to establish what the general feelings are towards the issues identified and using these results to inform the prioritisation of issues within the action plan.

- [Finland Community Guide](#) (*written in English*)
 - A short guide of good practice to assist rural communities and village associations to take forward social enterprise activity. This guide helps you to understand the rural context, explaining how to get started and identify your motivation and mission.
 - It explains how to map out the needs and hopes of local people, touches on market analysis, and the business planning process for community-based social enterprise.
 - Also gives a useful insight into collective leadership and how to distribute responsibilities equally among your group.