



Tool	Tips for using	Why you might use it	Why you might not use it
Printed materials Includes fact sheets, newsletters, newspaper advertising, brochures, flyers, leaflets, reports, letterbox drops, personalised invitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use clear, plain English or translate where required • Be brief and direct but not simplistic • Make it visually interesting but not busy or slick • Use language that is inclusive and jargon free • Provide contact details (phone, email, web address) • Offer translation services • Maintain an up to date mailing list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reach a large target audience • Community information in regular place and format • Allows for technical and legal reviews • Facilitates the documentation of community involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution planning inadequate • Materials do not reach the mark • Materials not read • Limited capacity to communicate complicated concepts • Information misinterpreted
Information sessions Public gatherings where people can engage at their own pace, drop in individually to view plans, ask questions, provide feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method and content should be tailored to the stakeholder group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to reach a large number of stakeholders • Can be targeted to specific stakeholder groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written material may not be accessible to people with visual impairment or low literacy levels
Displays Often located in public libraries or community centres, they can also be permanently located in a shopfront, or mobile and used in shopping centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To draw attention to a display, use inventive formats such as a colourfully painted bus or a pop up cart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take participation to hard to reach communities, and provide a less formal format for interaction with the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essentially a one way communication tool
Briefings Short presentations to key stakeholders, peak bodies, agencies and community groups to share information and respond to questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to provide an overview or update on a project • Presentation may be delivered by an agency representative and followed by detailed discussions in a question-and-answer format 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can also be used as a forum for feedback, and to uncover preliminary community issues and values • Less formal and expensive process than large public meetings • Help to build community goodwill and create a more effective atmosphere for dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that all groups are treated equally • Individuals conducting briefings should be well versed and able to answer questions, but also open and approachable to help build community relationships
Workshops Small and large workshops where participants work in small groups. These may include guest speakers, general discussion, or more targeted tasks for participants such as visioning and prioritising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be well designed and prepared for • Make sure the purpose is clear to all participants and that their level of interest is equal to the level of participation required • Table scribes are often needed to document the proceedings and tables also report back as part of facilitated meeting management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to provide information and personalise contact with the community • Workshops encourage involvement and interaction and allow the gathering of community feedback • Discussing complex issues, analysing competing options and generating ideas • Encourages joint working and problem solving • Builds ownership of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be costly due to need to hire venues, independent facilitators and provide refreshments, etc • Can also expose poor preparation
Interviews One-on-one discussion with community members or groups to gain detailed information on their views and attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use to obtain qualitative information from an individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can produce highly accurate results • Adds a personal dimension • Might be used where there are sensitivities associated with privacy or concerns about security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessitates more sensitivity than other methods • May raise expectations among some people or groups • May ignite community rivalry or raise allegations of special treatment • Careful preparation necessary
Field trips Guided site visits or tours of areas under discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps build relationships and trust • Useful for building capacity of communities to participate in complex discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be costly to arrange and require time commitment from both organisers and participants

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Charrettes Typically involves intense and possibly multi-day meetings that bring together a wide range of participants to generate ideas, responses and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work best when focused on technical aspects of planning and can be a catalyst for cooperation among key decision-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The time required to prepare, participate and report make this a process that works best in longer term engagements Can also be used to promote joint ownership of solutions and to defuse confrontational attitudes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires considerable preparation, time and resources
Round tables Round tables are one of the more flexible engagement formats and differ from session to session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants may be selected for the particular perspective or understanding that they bring The format usually includes a presentation followed by in-depth discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows for extended discussion and are often designed to solve a challenge Enables participants to hear multiple points of view through open discussion Encourages community participants to think 'outside the square' and find common ground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some participants may try to dominate a table discussion
'Town Hall' meetings Traditional 'town hall' style meetings are familiar, established ways for people to come together to express their opinions, hear a public speaker or proposed plan, engage in shared learning about a topic, or work together to develop solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not hold a town hall style public meeting if you are not willing to allow anyone to attend, including media; a public meeting must be open to anyone Engage an independent chair to host and moderate Make sure you provide for attendees who need assistance getting to and around the venue, hearing what's said, seeing what's presented, etc Consider childcare facilities to make it easier for people with young children to attend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces a project or issue to a community Provides all participants with a chance to voice their concerns, issues, and ideas Participants need to be willing to listen to each other, which can be useful for exploring alternative strategies and building consensus Also useful for reaching larger numbers of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unless carefully planned and well facilitated, town hall events can be high risk because they provide a platform for the loudest and most negative voices Many community members, especially those who fear being shouted down, will either not attend or not participate
World café This is a deliberative concept where participants work in small groups simultaneously on questions and change tables during the process, refining their understanding of an issue and working to find common ground as a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a scribe for each table to assist in keeping the conversation on track and moving A central moderator needs to keep the process fluid with summary thoughts captured so that a full report can be compiled after the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This process fosters open discussion and empathy World Cafe events benefit from involving larger numbers (more than 60) because they are dynamic Different points of view and life experience emerge very naturally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works best with large numbers and for deliberative formats only Dependent on a competent facilitator and participants willing to invest the time
Participatory budgeting Participatory budgeting is a process for involving citizens in setting priorities in the context of resource constraints, often through a working group format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to have the councils' real budget on the table for these processes to be rewarding, constructive and enlightening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used to educate the community in the difficulty of making decisions about how public funds are spent and the trade-offs that arise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not use this process unless you are willing to follow through on the community's preferences
Focus groups Originally a market research tool, focus groups are small facilitated discussions involving carefully selected individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use to test opinion on a particular issue prior to undertaking more widespread engagement Payment to participants is likely to be required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful when used early in a decision-making process or when time is limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May not be truly representative of views across the community May be criticised because participation has been rewarded with payment
Surveys and polls A quantitative research method to gauge views, experiences and behaviours A research method used to extrapolate results and determine what people think about an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always include open-ended questions and space for fuller comments Ensure that the questions are thoroughly tested in-house before they go public Be prepared to spend time on drafting and refining the questions and on compiling, interpreting and analysing the results Use digital survey tools wherever possible in large-scale consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Straightforward Focussed and specific Can gauge a large number of opinions Easily adapted Quick and cheap Provides a snapshot of opinions at a certain time Straightforward and accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to gather qualitative information Answers may be irrelevant Delivery methods can affect results May be too brief for people to provide their full opinions Results may be affected by poorly conceived or worded questions Large numbers of responses, particularly on paper-based surveys, can create handling and processing burdens

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Community consultative committee Forum for open discussion between representatives of the community, council and other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that membership is representative Assign senior participants from your own organisation Make sure that community participants are aware of the commitment required prior to joining Be prepared to be open with information Consider an independent chair or facilitator Publish minutes of all meetings in a timely fashion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be a powerful tool to demonstrate transparency and for frank and open discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be criticised because of the small number of people involved Can be a risk for community participants who may be seen as having compromised their positions by being too close to a process or unpopular project
Public notices Ad placed in local newspaper, notice boards, etc, informing the community of ways to participate, or of decisions made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A basic pre-requisite for all public policy decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members will look for them to know they can participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public notices are not a good way to reach community members who do not normally participate, or do not have access to newspapers etc
Partnerships Councils work together with communities to plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the governance arrangements are in place first These can take some time to set up, but are well worth it for building trust and commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require both communities and authorities consent to work closely and transparently to reach agreed outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not appropriate for all engagements or communities. It also may not always be possible to reach this level of trust and co-operation
Advisory groups A group of representatives or informed individuals convened to meet regularly as a sounding board for a decision-maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very useful for organisations that need to build relationships and communication channels with new communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisory groups have value where an external viewpoint is needed or for when a 'temperature check' of the mood of the community on a particular issue is required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited in the amount of representation they provide
Expert panel Used to gather concentrated opinions from a range of experts on a particular issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use to produce in-depth analysis on technical matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus intently on a specific subject Draws on experts who can often be objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process needs to be carefully focussed Breadth may be limited May be too 'exclusive'
Resident panels and precinct committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident panels and precinct committees can be used to seek views on a variety of themes and can also be conducted in conjunction with other forms of engagement A source of local knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be a vehicle for establishing long running forms of participation that go beyond single, issue-specific consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited in the amount of representation they provide
Steering committees A group of people who take responsibility for the success of a project, usually representative of the sponsors of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants need to have a good understanding of the issues and could be drawn from community leaders, elected representatives, individuals and members of groups involved in community initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically a group of between six and 10 people, the committee should be composed of representatives of the sponsoring organisations or agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can take on a life of their own and become adversarial if roles become blurred or if there is serious dissent
Websites and web forums Websites are used to provide information about, and links to, policy proposals as well as any other information a community may need to participate. Websites allow for the use of a wide variety of media formats, including video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be as simple as a single page on an organisation's website with a link to a specifically designed and separately hosted community engagement website that allows viewers to participate in online surveys, contribute to online forums, post a message, view interactive videos and documents and make submissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members will often look to your website as the most obvious place to obtain information, and for many community members, it could be the only way for them to participate due to time, geographical and other constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A proportion of people still struggle with the internet because of access constraints or because they are not web users. It should therefore not be the only tool you use Anonymous internet users may present challenges for honest, civil and open interaction
Email Direct and efficient method of engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive, personal and powerful as a means of communicating directly with the community Protocols must be set regarding style, language, tone of voice, response times and privacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows you to establish a personality, or 'tone of voice', that feels personal As a means of responding to questions, email is immediate and efficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can become devalued by overuse or by sending trivial information

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Smartphones Almost 70 per cent of Australian social media users access sites using a smartphone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that any content can adapt to different screen sizes, for example if including 3D design and game-style simulations in consultation exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you want to ensure the widest participation possible and allow people to access information and engage anytime, anywhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires specialist screen design to ensure readability and facilitate interaction
Applications (apps) An app – short for application – is a piece of software that runs on a computer or phone and enables a program to be run on that particular device	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apps are a fun and efficient way to engage. There are apps that put the user in charge of planning for a community, to give them a sense of the pressures of decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free apps are becoming part of the community expectation and can be a fresh way to engage, particularly with young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May alienate some members of the community who do not have the right equipment or cannot download the app
Simulation tools Software to explain, describe and support a new policy or planning mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable the user to investigate options and to visualise or experience likely consequences and impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful where participants can have a ‘hands on’ experience Attractive to participants who are tired of old engagement techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be expensive and may put some participants off due to being overly complex
YouTube Short (typically one to three minutes) videos or series of photos posted on and accessed via the internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used in conjunction with Facebook, this is proving to be a highly popular way to summarise a proposal and for community participants to inexpensively express their views and put forward their own ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With 11 million users, YouTube is the second strongest Australian online channel It is a story telling medium that is accessible and inexpensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YouTube requires that users are 13 years old and must be 18 years old to view some content
Instagram Instagram is an online photo and video sharing social networking site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use to extend your reach into the community, and to encourage young people to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inexpensive, immediate platform for sharing photos and videos of events, for example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a platform that is often used by celebrities, and with a minimum age requirement of 13 years, this tool may have limited application