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Engagement   
Guidance

3 September 2015

This image is the New Zealand government logo.

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# Online Engagement

Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.

* Use a [principles](#_Principles_of_engagement) based approach to engage with your stakeholders online
* Align your approach to your objectives and measures of success

This guidance was created in collaboration with the [NZ Online Engagement Community](https://engageonline.webtoolkit.govt.nz/cp/), which you are welcome to join. We thank Amelia Loye from [engage2](http://engage2.com.au/) for leading the development of this guidance.

The guidance is a work in progress, so please [email us your feedback](mailto:online@dia.govt.nz?subject=Feedback%20on%20online%20engagement%20guidance) on how useful you found it, what was missing, how it could be improved.

## The case for online engagement

Internationally and in New Zealand, there is an increasing need for organisations to actively seek the public’s opinions, thoughts and ideas about policies that will impact them. There are a range of [drivers](#_Drivers) and [success factors](#_Success_factors) to consider when you’re planning for online engagement.

## Is your organisation ready for online engagement?

Organisations with an established engagement policy and strategy that outlines agreed approaches and procedures are generally more ready for online engagement. Organisational engagement policies should align with organisational policies on:

* social media
* privacy and security
* information management
* records management
* stakeholder management
* channel strategy.

We recommend that organisational engagement policies are published to show a commitment to transparency, increase trust and encourage constructive participation, e.g. [NZ Transport Authority stakeholder and community engagement policy](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/public-engagement-manual/).

## Quick reference

* [Principles for online engagement](#_Principles_of_engagement)
* [Checklist for online engagement](#_Confirm_your_mandate)
* [Template: engagement strategy](#_Engagement_Strategy_Template_1)
* [Case study: Wellington City Council Draft Long Term Plan (2015)](#_Case_Study:_Wellington_2)
* [Definitions of key engagement terms](#_Definitions_of_key)

## Planning your online engagement

### [Developing your engagement strategy](#_Developing_your_engagement)

Your engagement strategy is where you will clearly define and communicate **why** you are engaging, your objectives and plan to engage. You will iteratively develop your strategy as you go through the planning steps. Without an agreed strategy you will find it difficult to match your objectives with your approach, manage expectations and risks, and select the right tools for online engagement.

Your engagement strategy should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Set clear expectations
* Plan and prepare carefully

### [Identifying your stakeholders and their needs](#_Identifying_your_stakeholders)

Before you design your approach you need to consider **who** your engagement stakeholders are, how they might be interested or impacted by your proposal or project and how they might engage.

Your stakeholder identification should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Be inclusive and reflect diversity
* Honour the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti O Waitangi

### [Designing your online engagement approach](#_Designing_your_online)

A high-level description of **how** you will engage online to meet your engagement objectives. When you have finalised your approach you will know the type of engagement appropriate for your project and the degree of engagement you want from different stakeholders during different phases.

Your online engagement approach should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage collaboration
* Encourage openness and learning

## Engaging stakeholders online

### [Promoting to and recruiting stakeholders](#_Promoting_to_and)

Decide the best methods for letting your stakeholders know about your engagement project and how they can get involved. Without sufficient promotion you are not likely to get the level of participation you need.

Your promotion and recruitment of stakeholders should demonstrate the following engagement principle:

* Be inclusive and reflect diversity

### [Communicating for online engagement](#_Communicating_for_online)

Create engaging content to overcome barriers to participation. **Make it easy** to participate and clear why and how people should get involved and what they will get out of it. Design proactive communications with your stakeholders’ needs and interests in mind.

Your communication should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage collaboration
* Encourage openness and learning
* Be inclusive and reflect diversity
* Honour the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti O Waitangi

### [Managing, responding to and sharing feedback](#_Managing,_responding_to)

Your engagement project will generate information and relationships. You need to be ready to manage both. Consider how you’re going to analyse and report, moderate responses and feedback to stakeholders.

Your management, response to and sharing of feedback should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage collaboration
* Encourage openness and learning

## Selecting the right tools for online engagement

### [Consider what you need the tools to do](#_Consider_what_you)

Your engagement strategy, including your mandate, purpose and approach will ensure you select the right tools and configure them to fit your objectives and the needs of your stakeholders. You will need tools that help you engage online and tools that help you manage stakeholder relationships, and the issues they raise. Managing this information well will give you insights past the timeframe of your current project.

Using tools that manage the engagement and the stakeholder relationships should demonstrate the following engagement principle:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness

### [Gather requirements](#_Gather_requirements)

It is important to consider the online engagement requirements of the project team, internal stakeholders, and particularly from the people who you want to engage with and those requirements match your engagement strategy, objectives and approach. There is also number of Government standards, policies, mandates, legislation and guides that you will need to consider when developing your requirements.

Matching your requirements to your strategy should demonstrate the following engagement principle:

* Plan and prepare carefully

### [Find and select the right tools](#_Find_and_select)

Where possible look for existing platforms or services that match your requirements. This reduces duplicate spend across government. Ask around to see what others have used and share your experiences to reduce the cross government effort on sourcing online engagement tools.

Selecting the right tools should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Make engagement standard practice
* Plan and prepare carefully

## Configuring and launching your online engagement

### [Configure your tools](#_Configure_your_online)

After selecting your tools you will need to set them up ensuring the design and content matches your objectives and your stakeholder needs and meets all necessary security and privacy requirements.

Tool configuration should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage openness and learning
* Set clear expectations

### [Try a test run](#_Try_a_test)

One way of checking you’re meeting yours and your stakeholders’ needs and expectations is to test out your tools and content with some friendly collaborators.

Trying a test run should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Encourage openness and learning
* Plan and prepare carefully
* Encourage collaboration

### [Consider a soft launch](#_Consider_a_soft)

Including trusted stakeholders in a soft-launch will help to bring them along with you and will help to population your engagement platform with some early feedback. This will help to encourage others to participate.

Having a soft launch should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Plan and prepare carefully
* Encourage collaboration

## Closing your online engagement

After you have collected sufficient stakeholder feedback you will need to analyse the feedback, report on the findings, manage all the information generated, and evaluate the engagement project.

Closing your online engagement should demonstrate the following engagement principles:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage openness and learning

## Further references

The following documents provide context and useful information for anyone designing and managing online engagement in New Zealand:

* [Good Practice Participate](http://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/good-practice-participate)
* [Kia Tutahi Standing Together](http://www.dia.govt.nz/KiaTutahi)
* [Social Media Guidance](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/social-media/)
* [Guide to Online Participation (2007)](https://www.ict.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Drupal/guide-to-online-participation-2007.pdf)
* [Web Accessibility Standard](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/standards/web-accessibility-standard-1-0/) and [Usability Standard](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/standards/web-usability-standard-1-2/)
* [Delivering Better Public Services](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/better-public-services)
* [Information Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy and Action Plan 2017](https://www.ict.govt.nz/strategy/)
* [Declaration of Open and Transparent Government](https://www.ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/open-government/declaration-open-and-transparent-government/)

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* Ian Morris – Engagement Specialist, Independent Consultant, United Kingdom

We would also like to thank Wellington City Council for sharing their online engagement case study.

## Endorsements

*"The NZ Guide to Online Engagement is a comprehensive, concise, easy-to-use handbook   
for public officials and employees who want to engage citizens online. The guide will help people set goals, relate their engagement efforts to key yardsticks like the IAP2 Spectrum[[1]](#footnote-1), and think through important challenges like participant recruitment. It also includes links to other resources that can help engagement leaders stay abreast of the rapid developments in this field."*

- Matt Leighninger  
Executive Director  
Deliberative Democracy Consortium  
Canada

*“It is wonderful to see more governments around the world taking active steps towards greater public engagement in governance and democracy. Greater public engagement in governance and policy design will help ensure we can all be more resilient and responsive to a rapidly changing world. Governments cannot solve problems in isolation, and genuine, effective online engagement is an important strategy for a modern government to tap into the wealth of expertise and experience of the broader community. This guide provides practical information and support for the New Zealand public service to better engage citizens in the decisions that shape their lives. Congratulations!”*

- Pia Waugh  
Director  
Open Data and Open Government   
Digital Transformation Office  
Australia

*“DIA have developed a very useful guide, both to the basic principles of true, meaningful engagement and how this can be achieved using online media. The step by step guidance is very readable and provides a clear pathway to develop and implement an online engagement strategy appropriate for your needs. This guide will greatly assist in the expansion of our online presence, together with widening the scope of our current face-to-face engagement projects.”*

- Jason Paul

Community Resilience Advisor

Wellington Region Emergency Management Office

# The case for online engagement in New Zealand

## Drivers

### Legislative requirements

Several pieces of legislation include requirements for central and local government to consult with the public including the Local Government Act 2002, Land Transport Act 1993, Resource Management Act 1991 and New Zealand Public Health and Disabilities Act 2000.

To meet these requirements, many agencies have developed their own engagement policies and procedures. It is not uncommon for local governments in New Zealand to have democracy teams.

### Shift in public expectations

Internationally, there is a trend for governments to engage with people online when considering new polices or services, or making changes that have an impact, as a critical factor in the success of any public sector initiative.

### Cost and convenience of online versus offline engagement

Engaging with the community face-to-face and offline can be expensive. You have to budget for venue hire, catering, facilitators, printing, travel and staff costs. Offline engagement is a good way to promote and encourage online engagement.

Engaging online is often a cheaper option when your objective is to engage with a wide range of people, especially those that are geographically dispersed. It is also much more convenient for some participants as they can **engage at a time suitable for them**. Online engagement should be designed to complement face-to-face activities. Offline methods can be used to promote, validate and encourage online engagement.

### Need to support international obligations to Open Government and Government’s commitment to digital transformation

As a member of the international [Open Government Partnership](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/open-government-partnership), New Zealand is committed to the principles of transparency, accountability and civic participation. Government agencies are using technology to [deliver Better Public Services](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/bps-interaction-with-govt) including improved online engagement for policy development and better service delivery, leading to better outcomes for people.

To support the delivery of these initiatives we have created:

* a [central listing for government consultations](http://www.govt.nz/consultations)
* good practice guidance for delivery of digital information and services on the [Web Toolkit](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/)
* [Web Accessibility and Usability Standards](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/standards/) to ensure government funded websites are built for inclusion

## Success factors

### The availability of online engagement tools and methods

Online engagement tools enable:

* collecting input through online surveys and submission systems
* [crowdsourcing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowdsourcing) and discuss issues using online discussion forums and blogs
* Collaborating using instant messaging, document and project management software.

Some of these tools are [open source](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source); others are custom-built proprietary software.

### Engagement capability is growing

Engagement has developed as a practice in New Zealand because:

* teams across government are experimenting with online engagement tools, supported by their agencies
* engagement professionals are sharing their lessons learned through events, guidance and communities of practice.

You can share what you have learned by taking part in the [NZ Online Engagement Community of Practice](https://engageonline.webtoolkit.govt.nz/cp/).

By sharing knowledge we will increase capability and advance the practice of online engagement. In doing so, we will improve public opinion about engagement and increase participation.

# Principles of engagement

## Build trust through transparency and responsiveness

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed. Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.

## Encourage collaboration

Support and encourage people, the public sector, community groups and others to work together to improve government.

## Encourage openness and learning

Create a safe environment to explore new ideas, learn and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively and make sure engagement is effective and relevant.

## Set clear expectations

Set expectations about the purpose of the engagement and how much influence people will have over the outcomes.

## Be inclusive and reflect diversity

Include a wide range of people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for results that reflect the views of all stakeholders.

## Make engagement standard practice

Promote a culture of engagement as standard practice across the public sector in support of ongoing public participation.

## Honour the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti O Waitangi

Tangata Whenua and TangataTīrīti work together to protect our respective rights and uphold our responsibilities to realise common and distinctive aspirations for increasing and improving fair and active participation.

## Plan and prepare carefully

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that engagement serves both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

## Principles from other places

* [National Principles for Public Engagement (Wales](http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/media/288366/pc_national_principles_poster3.pdf))
* [Deliberative public engagement: nine principles (UK)](http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Deliberative-public-engagement-nine-principles.pdf)
* [Principles Checklist (Mosman Council, Australia)](http://mosmanroundtable.net/ces/strategy/principles-checklist)

# Online engagement checklist

This checklist provides a summary of the steps to take when engaging online. You may also wish to print and complete the [strategy template](#_Engagement_Strategy_Template_1) as you move through this checklist.

1. Preparation
   * Review the [Online Engagement Guide](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/) and the [Principles of engagement](#_Principles_of_engagement)
   * Download the [Strategy Template](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/engagement-strategy-template/) to complete
   * Review your organisation’s engagement policy or related policies that can be used to support your approach e.g. social media, information and records management
2. Start with the basics
   * Confirm your mandate
   * Define your objectives
   * Define success
   * Determine project resourcing
   * Determine budget
   * Determine timeline for engagement
   * Prepare risk management plan

Principles demonstrated:

* Set clear expectations
* Plan and prepare carefully

1. Identifying your stakeholders and their needs
   * Conduct a stakeholder analysis
   * Determine if your stakeholders have been engaged before
   * Create a profile of your target community
   * Consider the social, technical economic and political context
   * Conduct research to understand stakeholder issues and needs
   * Consider how you are going to reach stakeholders offline and online

Principles demonstrated:

* Be inclusive and reflect diversity
* Honour the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti O Waitangi

1. Designing your online engagement approach
   * Consider the engagement project phases
   * Consider the stakeholders’ journey
   * Determine the type of engagement
   * Consider the implications of formal, informal and social input
   * Determine how much participation you want
   * Clarify if you’ll collect quantitative or qualitative data
   * Consider how you’ll integrate online and offline engagement methods.

Principles demonstrated:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage collaboration
* Encourage openness and learning

1. Engaging your stakeholders online
   * Promote engagement and recruit stakeholders
   * Produce engaging communications
   * Managing, responding to and sharing feedback

Principles demonstrated:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage collaboration
* Encourage openness and learning
* Be inclusive and reflect diversity
* Honour the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti O Waitangi

1. Selecting the right tools for online engagement
   * Consider what you want the tools to do
   * Gather requirements
   * Find and select the right tools

Principles demonstrated:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Plan and prepare carefully

1. Configuring and launching your online engagement
   * Configure your tools
   * Try a test run
   * Consider a soft launch
   * List on [Govt.nz](http://www.govt.nz/consultations)

Principles demonstrated:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage openness and learning
* Set clear expectations

1. Online discussion forums
   * Manage your online engagement
   * Demonstrate you're listening
   * Cultivate online communities
   * Integrate online and offline methods
   * Refine your approach
   * Measure and report success
   * Improve your user experience

Principles demonstrated:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage collaboration
* Encourage openness and learning
* Be inclusive and reflect diversity

1. Close your engagement
   * Analyse and report feedback
   * Manage the information generated
   * Evaluate your engagement project

Principles demonstrated:

* Build trust through transparency and responsiveness
* Encourage openness and learning

# Engagement strategy template

This Engagement Strategy Template is intended to be a starting point for you to use in developing your project engagement strategy. Each section is set up for you to add information that meets your requirements. Prompts and example text is in *blue italicised text* and should be removed from your strategy document.

[Snapshot](#_Snapshot)

[Introduction](#_Introduction)

* [Project overview](#_Project_overview)
* [Key project milestones](#_Key_project_milestones)
* [Context](#_Context)

[Engagement mandate](#_Engagement_mandate)

[Engagement objectives](#_Engagement_objectives_1)

* [Stakeholders](#_Stakeholders)
* [Resources](#_Resources)
* [Budget](#_Budget)

[Engagement approach](#_Engagement_approach)

* [Engagement phases](#_Engagement_phases)
* [Principles](#_Principles)
* [Engagement policy](#_Engagement_policy)
* [Key messages](#_Key_messages)
* [Topics open for discussion](#_Topics_open_for)
* [Engagement methods](#_Engagement_methods)
* [Protocols for engagement](#_Protocols_for_engagement)

[Implementation plan](#_Implementation_plan)

[Evaluation](#_Evaluation)

* [Measures of success](#_Measures_of_success)
* [Process to evaluate](#_Process_to_evaluate)

Appendix

* [Example 1: Mandate template](#_Example_1:_Mandate)
* [Example 2: Mandate as a simple statement](#_Example_2:_Mandate)
* [Example Moderation policy](#_Appendix_B:_Moderation)

## Snapshot

*If your project is long term you might also consider providing a strategy snapshot at the start of your document.*

| Phase | Critical variables | Objectives | Stakeholders | Methods |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Planning the project | *Complete environmental scan* | *To understand current awareness* | *All New Zealanders who are eligible to vote* | *Research* |
| Launching the project |  |  |  |  |
| Engagement |  |  |  |  |
| Close engagement |  |  |  |  |

## Introduction

### Project overview

* *Project description*
* *Who is involved*
* *Project rationale – what is the purpose of the project? – generally, not just engagement.*

### Key project milestones

*Include milestones for both the engagement and the wider project.*

The key milestones for the project:

| Date | Activity |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Research* |
|  | *Focused engagement with key stakeholders* |
|  | *Develop draft strategy/policy, etc* |
|  | *Engage on draft strategy/policy, etc* |
|  | *Develop final strategy/policy, etc and summary of engagement* |
|  | *Present final strategy/policy, etc and summary of engagement back to stakeholders (close the loop)* |

### Context

#### Status of the project

*Answer questions that provide clarity about the status of the project with respect to the community/stakeholder interests and views, current and past state of the project, e.g.:*

* *What do the community know, think of the project?*
* *Is this the first stage of engagement?*
* *What did previous communications and engagement look like – methods?*
* *Who has engaged with you on this issue – general description of awareness of issue and representation in discussion to date?*
* *What did they say about the project?*

#### Social, technical, economic and political considerations

*Consider:*

* *Are there any social and economic issues you should be aware of?*
* *Do you need to take into account literacy, language or cultural considerations?*
* *Is there any political sensitivity around the topic you are discussing?*
* *How technical are your stakeholders?*
* *Will they be able to access the internet and online tools for engagement?*
* *How can you help them engage?*

| Item | Details |
| --- | --- |
| General considerations |  |
| Opportunity for project to have a positive impact |  |
| Potential issues that may require management |  |
| Digital literacy of community and accessibility of internet |  |

#### How this strategy fits into the broader communications and engagement

| Item | Details |
| --- | --- |
| *Corporate engagement strategy and tools* |  |
| *How the strategy will integrate with offline project engagement* |  |
| *Integration with other online methods:* |  |
| * *Website integration* |  |
| * *Social media integration – policy and channels to be used* |  |
| * *Submission collection* |  |

## Engagement mandate

*Describes the purpose and authority to engage.*

*See the guidance on* [*confirming your mandate*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#confirm-your-mandate)*.  
Also see the* [*example mandates in Appendix A*](#_Appendix_A:_Engagement)

## Engagement objectives

*See the guidance on* [*defining your engagement objectives*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#define-your-engagement-objectives)*.*

*Try and make your objectives SMART:*

* *Specific: target a specific area for improvement, explain why you are engaging*
* *Measurable: quantify what you hope to get out of the process*
* *Assignable: specify who will do it*
* *Realistic: state what results can realistically be achieved within given constraints (available resources, expertise, time, budget, etc)*
* *Time-related: specify when the result(s) can be achieved.*

The objectives of engagement for this projectinclude:

| Objective | Details |
| --- | --- |
| *Promote…* |  |
| *Build capability…* |  |
| *Demonstrate and test…* |  |
| *Gather input to inform…* |  |

### Stakeholders

*Below is a basic assessment of stakeholders and their interests in the project. See the guidance on* [*stakeholder analysis*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/identifying-your-stakeholders-and-their-needs/#conduct-stakeholder-analysis) *for further detail.*

| Stakeholder | Their interest in the project | Level of input into the project | Status of relationship | Desired outcome |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Agency staff and management* |  |  |  |  |
| *Regional Authority* |  |  |  |  |
| *Local Government* |  |  |  |  |
| *Central Government – agencies* |  |  |  |  |
| *Ministers* |  |  |  |  |
| *Opposition* |  |  |  |  |
| *Industry stakeholders* |  |  |  |  |
| *Business stakeholders* |  |  |  |  |
| *Community groups* |  |  |  |  |
| *Community members* |  |  |  |  |

### Resources

*See the guidance on* [*project resourcing*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#determine-project-resourcing) *for definitions of roles.*

*NOTE: Each person in the project team can take on multiple roles if they have the right skills.*

The project team consists of the following roles:

| Project team | Name | Contact details |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Senior Responsible Officer |  |  |
| Project Manager |  |  |
| Engagement Lead / Online Community Manager |  |  |
| Subject Matter Expert |  |  |
| Content Editor |  |  |
| Technical Support |  |  |

This team will work closely with:

| Wider team and support | Name | Contact details |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Web manager |  |  |
| Privacy advisor |  |  |
| Information and records manager |  |  |

### Budget

*Refer to your agency’s financial policy regarding Capital and Operational expenditure.*

The project’s estimated budget is:

| Item | Date Due | Amount | Contingency | Purpose |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Marketing – online and offline* |  |  |  |  |
| *Engagement tools - selection and configuration; procurement/development and security accreditation* |  |  |  |  |
| *Strategy development. It is common for project teams to seek advice outside their agency or team to draft or review a strategy.* |  |  |  |  |
| *Technical service provision, e.g. website development and system integration, and ongoing technical support* |  |  |  |  |
| *Legal advice* |  |  |  |  |
| *Forum moderation, online community management and facilitation.* |  |  |  |  |
| *Content development practitioners* |  |  |  |  |
| *Requirements gathering, selection and configuration of tools – increasingly from independent* |  |  |  |  |
| Total |  | $ | $ |  |

## Engagement approach

### Engagement phases

*See the guidance on* [*engagement phases*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/designing-your-online-engagement-approach/#consider-the-engagement-project-phases)*.*

| Timeframe | Phase | Description |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *1 Sep – 1 Oct* | Planning the project | *Research*  *Gather input*  *Listen - Research to identify community and stakeholders, and how they engage with each other and around the topic*  *Crowd source ideas* |
| *1 Oct – 1 Nov* | Launching the project | *Announce project*  *Inform interested stakeholders*  *Encourage participation* |
| *1 Nov – 31 Dec* | Engagement | *Consultation*  *Collect feedback on, and discuss aspects of, proposed solution*  *Responsive engagement*  *Analysis*  *Internal process to analyse all information collected during consultation* |
| *31 Dec* | Close engagement | *Post-consultation*   * *Report back / close the loop* * *Evaluation* |
| *Ongoing* | Ongoing engagement | * *Updates for interested stakeholders* * *Co-design and co-delivery of implementation programs* * *Support partners to deliver acceleration projects* * *Report back to community* * *Community groups who can support project stewardship* |

### Principles

*Determine what principles fit your overall engagement strategy and consider which ones are specific to certain phases. Recommended principles are:*

1. ***Build trust through transparency and responsiveness*** *- Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed. Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.*
2. ***Encourage collaboration*** *- Support and encourage people, the public sector, community groups and others to work together to improve government.*

1. ***Encourage openness and learning*** *- Create a safe environment to explore new ideas, learn and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively and make sure engagement is effective and relevant.*

1. ***Set clear expectations*** *- Set expectations about the purpose of the engagement and how much influence people will have over the outcomes.*

1. ***Be inclusive and reflect diversity*** *- Include a wide range of people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for results that reflect the views of all stakeholders.*

1. ***Make engagement standard practice*** *- Promote a culture of engagement as standard practice across the public sector in support of ongoing public participation.*

1. ***Honour the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tīrīti O Waitangi*** *- Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tīrīti work together to protect our respective rights and uphold our responsibilities to realise common and distinctive aspirations for increasing and improving fair and active participation.*

1. ***Plan and prepare carefully*** *- Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that engagement serves both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.*

### Engagement policy

*An ‘engagement policy’ is the standard you apply when engaging. It defines the principles and rules of engagement for you and your stakeholders. It also provides a basis for your engagement strategy and ensures your project mandate and engagement principles are endorsed and implemented.*

*See the guidance on* [*developing your engagement policy*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#develop-your-engagement-policy)*.*

*Also see the* [*example moderation policy in Appendix B*](#_Appendix_B:_Moderation)*.*

*Use the statements below to describe your engagement policy at a high level.*

* Online engagement will be used to support delivery of the *[project name]* stakeholder engagement and communications strategy.
* Feedback will be gathered through *[eg website/ social media/ email address].*
* Feedback will be recorded, analysed and reported progressively to the project team by *[name of person or group responsible].*
* Feedback will be published according to the moderation policy by *[name of person or group responsible]* on *[eg website/ social media]* within *[timeframe]* after being received.
* Engagement will be *[reactive and / or proactive]* with content used both planned and responsive.
* Analytics, interactions and key terms will be monitored *[daily/weekly]* by *[name of person or group responsible]* and reported to the project team *[daily/weekly]*.
* *[Name of person or group responsible]* will be empowered to manage community and online channels in real-time on behalf o*f [project name]* within the terms of the agreed issues escalation policy*.*
* The *[organisation or project name]* moderation policy will be published on *[eg website/ social media]* (and is attached to this strategy).

### Key messages

*Consider what key messages are needed for your engagement strategy. You might want to think about:*

* *About the project – what is your story?*
* *Organisations team and role – personalize*
* *Current understanding of the problem, project rationalization*
* *Role of engagement and community input in the project*
* *What the outcomes of the project will be*
* *Timeframes.*

| Key message | Supporting details |
| --- | --- |
| *Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.* | [*Transparency International rates New Zealand as the second most trusted country*.](http://transparency.org.nz/images/2014/CPI2014-map-and-country-results.jpg) |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

### Topics open for discussion

| Topic guidelines | Details |
| --- | --- |
| *What aspects of the project are open to influence…?* |  |
| *Negotiables* |  |
| *Non-negotiables* |  |

#### List the key decisions / changes to be made

| Key decisions and changes | Why |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

#### What do you want / need to know

| Item | What do you want / need to know? |
| --- | --- |
| *About the Community* |  |
| *About the Stakeholders* |  |
| *About Potential Impacts* |  |

#### What are your questions?

| Audience | Questions |
| --- | --- |
| *To the Local community* |  |
| *To the Wider stakeholders* |  |
| *To the Community organisations* |  |

### Engagement methods

This section includes a general description of methods to be used.For more detail about these methods and how they will be managed see the [content strategy](#_Content_strategy) and [protocols for engagement](#_Protocols_for_engagement).

*See the guidance on* [*engagement methods*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/designing-your-online-engagement-approach/#determine-the-levels-and-methods-of-participation)*.*

| Method | Details |
| --- | --- |
| Inform and invite participation | *For example, methods to:*   * *Drive traffic online* * *Promote offline.* |
| Research and collect input |  |
| Crowd source and discuss ideas |  |
| Engage to build capability |  |
| Consultation around strategy |  |
| Responsive engagement methods | * *Project updates* * *Social media and community management* * *Responding to inquiries* * *Issues management* |
| Closing the project | * *Analysis and consideration of information and input provided* * *Reporting* * *Other steps* |
| Ongoing engagement |  |

### Protocols for engagement

#### Relationship management

How and who will contact and manage ongoing liaisons/relationships with stakeholder groups.

| Stakeholder group | Relationship manager | Method |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Executives* |  |  |
| *Businesses* |  |  |
| *Community members* |  | *All communications with community members and stakeholders will be documented in [name of document and location] and shared with [name of person or group].* |
| *Specific community groups* |  |  |

#### Management of information collected

*See the guidance on* [*managing, responding to and sharing feedback*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/engaging-stakeholders-online/managing-responding-to-and-sharing-feedback/)*.*

* Consent for the collection and use of *[type of information]* will be collected at *[name of document and location]* and a copy of the consent statement will be attached.
* Information and enquiries about the project may be collected through:
  + *In person – at events, customer service centre*
  + *Phone – we call them or they call us*
  + *Email – contact us page or direct to staff of*
  + *Written correspondence*
  + *Social Media*
  + *Events*
* Information will be collated and stored in the following ways:
  + Feedback gathered at events – will be recorded and handed over to *[name of person or group]*.
  + Social media – discussion about this project on social media will be captured and treated as input if it uses #*[hashtag]*or @*[Twitter handle]*. This information will be captured using *[name of app or document]*
  + Submissions – will be formally collected through an online form on the website or through mail to *[name of person or group]* then shared with *[name of person or group]*.
  + Emails – any email related to the project will be **[name of person or group]**.
  + Phone – calls will not be recorded. Callers will be encouraged to use online methods to provide input. If this is not possible a summary may be uploaded into *[name of document, website or other location]* for ongoing issues and relationship management.
* Submissions will be published publicly in accordance to *[name of policy]* policy.
* All records will be retained in accordance with the *[name of organisation or project]* Privacy Statement, records management protocols and advice provided by *[name of person or group]*.
* Information collected will be used to develop reports as follows.

#### Reporting

* Progressive reporting to community and stakeholders engaged.
* Weekly reports will be provided to *[name of project]* project team about:
  + Level of participation
  + Key themes
* Monthly report will be provided to *[list governance body]*about *x, y, and z*.
* At the end of consultation a full consultation report will be provided to *[list governance body and other key stakeholders]*.
* A public consultation report will be published on *[name of website or other location]*. This document *will / will not* include personal details of submitters/participants, or other personal information.

#### Management of online channels

| Item | Responsible person | Method |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Manage online channels – branding decisions, configuration and approval to launch |  |  |
| Manage access to online tools – login details: |  | *List who will be given access and why* |
| Process to pre-test online engagement methods |  | *Describe the process* |
| Create content |  |  |
| Review content |  |  |
| Approve content |  |  |
| Develop the moderation policy *Check if your organisation already has one you can refer to. Also see the example* [*moderation policy in Appendix B*](#_Appendix_B:_Moderation)*.* |  |  |
| Develop the social media policy *Check if your organisation already has one you can refer to* |  | *Who will you follow?* |
| Manage the online community |  |  |
| Provide responsive engagement |  | *What type of content will you like and share?* |

#### Responsive engagement

* To ensure timely response and effective community management staff will:
  + Monitor pages and moderate comments – in accordance with the moderation policy
  + Respond to enquiries using responses to frequently asked questions (FAQ)
  + Acknowledging and encouraging participation by thanking community members for comments and asking for clarification when they do not understand comments made
  + Proactively manage issues
* Issues will be managed to:
  + Protect the *[name of organisation]* brand and reputation
  + Protect privacy of our stakeholders
* Responses to comments will acknowledge input, answer questions, correct misinformation, encourage and direct ongoing discussion
* Updates on the project – progress updates, photos from events and from team meetings will be used to demonstrate transparency and provide updates on how input is being used and considered (see the [content strategy](#_Content_strategy))
* The project team may also wish to ask follow up questions about feedback and/or provide a response to feedback throughout the process

#### Handling of enquiries and issues management

* All enquiries will be:
  + Responded to within *[list expected response time]*timeframe as outlined in the response policy
  + Responded to using the standard responses with new content added to a central *[name of document, website or other location]*
  + Documented – see management of information from stakeholders
  + Any reoccurring requests for information or frequently occurring issues will be responded to through *[name of person or group]*.
* *[name of person or group]*has been nominated and empowered to respond on behalf of the team if issues relate to the standard responses
* If a question arises that is outside of the scope of the approved responses the online community manager will draft a response and obtain approval from *[name of person or group]* via *[method eg email, memo]*. This response will then be added to the standard response.
* If an issue arises that has the potential to impact on the *[name of organisation]* reputation or brand, *[name of person or group]* will *[name of person or group]* to inform them of the issue and suggest actions to be taken. *[name of person or group]* will then advise how best to inform and request involvement of the *[name of person title]*if required.
* Media enquiries and/or issues will be: referred to *[name of person or group]*
* Enquiries by Ministers will be referred to *[name of person or group]*

#### Content strategy

* Proactive content - a storyboard of content will be created using:
  + Evidence/information used to inform draft proposals
  + Updates on the finalisation of the *[XXXX]*
  + Promotion of engagement events being held
  + Details about related projects and programs
  + Videos – *[created content]*, Voxpops from events, advertisements
  + Photos – from events, from across *[events, groups, promotions]*, drawing from events, photos from across *[name of website or app]*(user-generated photos)
  + Power points – used at events will be *[name and location of source file]*
* Responsive content:
  + Participation on social media during events
  + Progressive informal summaries of feedback provided
  + Media releases
  + Reports and materials used by the project team to inform draft proposals
  + Facts about *[name and / or focus of project]*
  + Articles and updates about *[name and / or focus of project]*from reputable sources around the world
  + Related community events
  + Related activities across Government
  + Relevant stakeholders, community leaders, networks and groups will be identified, monitored and their participation encouraged
  + Recognize and support the efforts of our partners and community groups who are supporting engagement

#### Evaluation process

* Evaluation process: *[name of person or group]*will conduct the evaluation at *[expected date or timeframe]* date and on a fortnightly basis using the metrics and processes outlined in the evaluation section of this document.

#### Post – consultation engagement handover

* If the project team is not responsible for ongoing engagement, what is the handover process of systems, relationships and issues outside the scope of the project to *[name of person or group]* team within your organization and/or *[name of person or group]*team outside your organization (taking into account information management requirements).

## Implementation plan

| Timeframe | Phase | Engagement objective | Method | Comments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *1 Sep – 1 Oct* | Planning the project |  |  |  |
| *1 Oct – 1 Nov* | Launching the project |  |  |  |
| *1 Nov – 31 Dec* | Engagement |  |  |  |
| *31 Dec* | Close engagement |  |  |  |
| *Ongoing* | Ongoing engagement |  |  |  |

## Evaluation

### Measures of success

*See the guidance on* [*metrics of success*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#define-your-metrics-of-success)*.*

We will know we are successful when we have:

* *Reached [number]number of stakeholders*
* *When [ %]% of the number of stakeholders engaged represent [number]of the population*
* *Volume of input exceeds [number]*
* *The quality of input reflects an understanding of [issue, constraints, budget etc]*

### Process to evaluate

*[name and / or focus of project]*will be monitored through *[which]*measures and reported through *[name of report and / recipients]*reports on a *[add frequency]*basis.

## Appendix A: Engagement mandate

### Example 1: Mandate template

This example template has been adapted from training materials shared publicly by the Consultation Institute, in the United Kingdom.

**We…** *[Name of person or group responsible for the consultation]*

**need to hear the views of the...** *[target stakeholders or community - stakeholder types, demographics, geographic area, those directly or indirectly impacted or interested in the issue.]*

**about...** *[Issue you asking the community and stakeholders about]*

**so that...** *[Decision-maker who is responsible for making the decision / changes after consultation]*

**can...** *[make X decision and do X after consultation]*

**on/by...** *[add date]* when the *[focus of project]*action */[focus of project]*decision needs to take place

**so as to achieve / accomplish...** *[Corporate or project objectives. Contribute to other objectives]*

*Also see the guidance on* [*defining your engagement objectives*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#define-your-engagement-objectives) *and* [*metrics of success*](http://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#define-your-metrics-of-success).

### Example 2: Mandate as a simple statement

We are engaging *[stakeholder group 1]* and *[stakeholder group 2]* about *X* and *Y* because we want to understand *Z* so that we can do *[focus of project]* in a way that ensures *[stakeholder group 1]* and *[stakeholder group 2]* are able to maximise opportunities around *[objectives of the project]*.

Engaging *[stakeholder groups/types]* in this way will help us to make a decision about how to take *Z* into account when doing *[focus of the project]*.

When we get this right we will have achieved *[objectives of the project]* with the support of stakeholders *[stakeholder group 1]* and *[stakeholder group 2]*.

## Appendix B: Moderation policy

If you are directly responsible for pre- or post-publication moderation of user content, it is important to provide a moderation policy explaining what form of moderation is being applied, who is responsible and how users can contact them.

A moderation policy should always link back to the discussion rules. Wherever possible, an alternative means by which a user can contact the consulting organisation should also be provided in case of a dispute.

When hosting a discussion on a third-party site, check the terms of use on that site and consider adding any additional rules to the space you are providing moderation for.

An example moderation policy for a discussion forum may look like the following:

### Will X consultation/policy team be participating in the discussions?

*Yes, relevant team representatives intend to regularly visit the forum discussions and, where appropriate, submit posts to encourage discussion.*

### What is moderation?

*Moderation is the practice of facilitating online interaction to ensure that everyone can take part in discussion, get their views across and that the consultation meets its objectives. It is also about maintaining the flow of the discussion by checking all posts in relation to the terms and conditions of the site.*

### What is a moderator?

*‘Moderator’ is a term for someone who is responsible for making sure that the forum discussion rules are adhered to. A moderator is similar to a chair of a face-to-face meeting and is there to make sure that everyone feels comfortable and able to participate in the online discussion.*

### Who are the moderators of this discussion forum?

*This forum will be moderated by the X consultation/policy team. The moderators always aim to be fair and objective. Moderators are concerned with the quality of the discussion not the interests of one individual, group or idea over another.*

*Direct communication between the participants and the moderators can take place via email. The moderators’ email address is X.*

### What form of moderation will be used in this discussion forum?

*There are two types of moderation available:*

* *Pre-publication moderation: where all posts are checked against the terms and conditions before they are published.*
* *Post-publication moderation: where all participant posts are checked against the terms and conditions after they are published.*

*This forum will employ a [pre- / post-] moderation strategy. This means that posts will/will not [delete as appropriate] go live instantly. They will be checked regularly [define timeframe] by the moderators.*

*During the working week, all posts will go live within 24 hours of submission. Posts made during the weekend will go live on the following business day. Forum spaces are readable at all times and you can submit a post at any time.*

# Case Study: Wellington City Council Draft Long Term Plan

* [About the project](#_About_the_project)
* [Engagement objectives](#_Engagement_objectives)
* [Engagement](#_Engagement)
* [Technology](#_Technology)
* [Analysis and reporting feedback](#_Analysis_and_reporting)
* [Outcomes](#_Outcomes)
* [Lessons learned](#_Lessons_learned)
* [Observations](#_Observations)

## About the project

In March 2015, the Wellington City Council (the Council) sought public feedback for the city’s Draft Long Term Plan (LTP), a 10-year plan to address issues under the Council’s jurisdiction including budgeting, programs, performance measures, infrastructure developments and council activities. The LTP is reviewed every three years to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Under the [Significance and Engagement Policy](http://wellington.govt.nz/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/policies/significance-and-engagement-policy), Local Councils must engage the community and facilitate the opportunity for citizens to provide feedback about issues in their city.

The Council aimed to achieve transparency in the decision making process, garner support for plans for economic growth, and facilitate an engaging consultation process. Specifically, they aimed to receive support for the creation of an investment fund for the community’s economic growth via increased rates.

Planning for the project began in late 2014 with engagement officially launched in March 2015. The Council invited input into the process through a project website − [Our 10-year plan](http://www.our10yearplan.co.nz/) – social media channels, online and offline events.

## Engagement objectives

The consultation was designed to demonstrate a transparent planning process open to community input. Instead of reading through the entire consultation document, the Council designed a website to enable Wellingtonians to quickly understand the overall ‘invest to grow’ approach and easily provide feedback and comments on the major ideas proposed.

The 28 big ideas in the draft plan were featured across engagement methods; participants were asked to provide their thoughts, views and comments about the ideas and about each other’s input. Public sentiment around the topics discussed was gauged throughout the consultation process on the project website.

## Engagement

### Overview

The Council sought feedback from the community in a variety of ways:

* online engagement through an interactive website
* social media channels:
  + Facebook: [Wellington City Council](https://www.facebook.com/wellingtoncitycouncil)
  + Twitter: [@wgtnCC](https://twitter.com/wgtncc) and [@WgtnEvents](https://twitter.com/WgtnEvents)
  + Flickr: [Wellington City Council](https://www.flickr.com/photos/wgtncc)
  + Instagram:[wgtncc](https://instagram.com/wgtncc/)
  + Youtube: [Wellington City Council](https://www.youtube.com/user/WgtnCC)
* Virtual Ward Meetings, which were online meetings hosted on Facebook and Twitter
* face-to-face interactions

The Twitter hashtag #askWCC and the commenting function on Facebook were monitored to gather the public’s views. Facebook and Twitter were also used to invite the community to participate in two Virtual Ward Meetings. In May 2015, oral hearings also took place where individuals were able to present submissions to Council members.

### Virtual Ward Meetings

Virtual Ward Meetings were hosted on Facebook and Twitter simultaneously so participants could ask questions about the LTP in real-time directly to Council, Councillors and the executive leadership team. All Twitter posts, Facebook comments and responses from the meeting were shared on the Council’s [Storify](https://storify.com/) platform.

The Council received mixed sentiments about different elements of the meetings. Some individuals liked the opportunity to provide feedback from their own home while others felt the meetings could have been better promoted.

Meeting outcomes:

* Facebook
  + 5,700 people saw a link to the Virtual Ward event in their Facebook feed
  + 294 individual users viewed the Facebook event page for the Virtual Ward Meetings
  + 87 people engaged with the Virtual Ward Meetings event page
* Twitter
  + 9,800 post impressions were seen in people’s Twitter feeds
  + 233 people engaged with the Council’s tweets

*[\*Source](https://www.dropbox.com/s/zcjevf8ynzqnc92/ALGIM2015-virtualwards-presentation-v1.pdf?dl=0" \t "_blank)*[: ALGIM2015 Virtual Wards Presentation](https://www.dropbox.com/s/zcjevf8ynzqnc92/ALGIM2015-virtualwards-presentation-v1.pdf?dl=0" \t "_blank)

### Online engagement

The interactive website was designed to be fully responsive, profile the 28 big ideas and invite the community to share their thoughts.

Comments shared by participants were published in real-time so participants could see their feedback online and discuss and share each other’s ideas.

Dynamic infographic dashboards were also used to collate data and share live summaries so participants could be kept up-to-date on feedback received.

### Offline engagement

Offline engagement methods used included face-to-face ward meetings, public meetings, the option to print and mail a submission, and newspaper advertisements. The Council received a significant number of hard copy submission forms, many of which were template responses.

## Technology

### Forms

* [Typeform](http://www.typeform.com/) was used to collect feedback for integration with Silverstripe, a CMS and framework platform, using custom API development.

### Presentation

* Chart Java Script library was used to show data collected from the Typeform dashboard for public presentation on the website
* Google Maps was used to present feedback based on geographic location

### Post-engagement collation

* CSV outputs and Excel scripts were used for the collection and analysis of data.

### Social Media

* Twitter, Facebook

**Content management**

* Storify

## Analysis and reporting feedback

After the submission period closed on 24 June, summaries of feedback collected were published on the Council’s website with the final LTP and deliberations report also accessible online.

The Council used CSV outputs and Excel scripts to collect and analyse data received. All content was integrated into one spreadsheet, except for email data, from which emerging themes were noted alongside comments from ward meetings. The criteria used in reporting were demographics, geo-graphics and how the feedback was reported.

Feedback received was overlaid onto the suburb map of Wellington so the sentiment for any idea could be identified in each suburb. This clearly showed bias for local issues relevant to affected communities. For example, participants closest to the airport opposed an extension of the runway.

## Outcomes

The approach stimulated discussion and a high rate of participation resulting in more feedback received than ever before.

Participation was measured using web analytics and metrics including:

* traffic to the website: 12,872 visits from 7, 568 visitors
* mobile visitors: 20 per cent
* 2,191 responses
* time spent on each page and video views
* form completion rates: over 80 per cent
* demographics per engagement method: for example, younger audiences used website methods while older audiences were more likely to use the formal feedback form
* traffic driven to other pages on the Council website
* positive mentions on various websites and media outlets
* more than 68 per cent of participants were supportive of Council’s plans

Incredibly, there was not a single comment or piece of feedback provided that had to be removed. Wellingtonians responded magnificently and maturely to the opportunity to participate, sharing their thoughts with the Council in a constructive manner.

The high rate of engagement benefited the public as well as Councillors and Council officers, many of whom checked the website and reviewed feedback every day. The success of the project also allowed Councillors and Council officers to immediately focus on the most talked-about issues.

The website remains an important source of information for anyone interested in Long-Term Planning and community in Wellington.

## Lessons learned

* It may be more effective to promote a single virtual ward for securing attendance rather than providing multiple options for meeting times.
* Improving back-end user functionality would have made it easier to collect, organise and analyse the submissions.
* By publishing ideas and allowing others to comment on them, the Council progressively demonstrated the volume and range of views received and sentiment around them which helped manage expectations and improve the quality of discussion.
* Combining formal and informal feedback methodologies requires clear communication about how feedback will be used for each method and whether there is different weighting between survey results versus Facebook comments, for example.
* Creating high-quality video content was time consuming, had little impact on traffic to the consultation site and very few views.
* Views of video content were tracked during the consultation and a decision was made to add the question “How can we grow Wellington?” on the cover frame which increased the number of people viewing the video.
* Consider time allowance required for collecting and analysing data from various channels - in this instance, after the closing of submissions it took 3 days to collate all data from the feedback then produce reports for the business teams.
* Younger participants preferred the online engagement method to the formal submission forms.
* The Council was able to save money on their printing budget by reducing the number of printed consultation documents.

## Observations

* Thin methods with low barriers to participation increased the volume of feedback received
* The well thought-out and user-friendly web interface, combined with an integrated social media strategy made it easy for people to engage and for Council to demonstrate they were listening
* Council demonstrated [Open Government principles](http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/open-government-declaration), particularly the principles of transparency and accountability by publishing comments, feedback and deliberation reports, and how they were addressing the issues raised.
* The LTP engagement process satisfies some of the outcomes as outlined in the [Kia Tutahi Relationship Accord](http://www.dia.govt.nz/KiaTutahi), including:
  + “Communities and government jointly review progress and share learning”
  + “Communities and government jointly resolve longstanding matters of concern, such as, participation in decision-making around policy and service delivery issues and funding arrangements.
  + “Communities and government are in genuine and purposeful engagement on matters of mutual interest and importance.

# Case Study: Auckland Council Draft Long Term Plan

## About the project

Every 10 years, New Zealand councils draft a Long-Term Plan (LTP) outlining details of how each council will invest in the city into the future. These plans are reviewed every 3 years to ensure their ongoing currency and effectiveness and under the Significance and Engagement Policy, councils must consult and give the community an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft plan.

This case study is about the way Auckland Council engaged and invited input online and offline.

## Engagement Objectives

The aim of the consultation process was to deliver a highly transparent, representative and accessible experience for Aucklanders. The process was designed to:

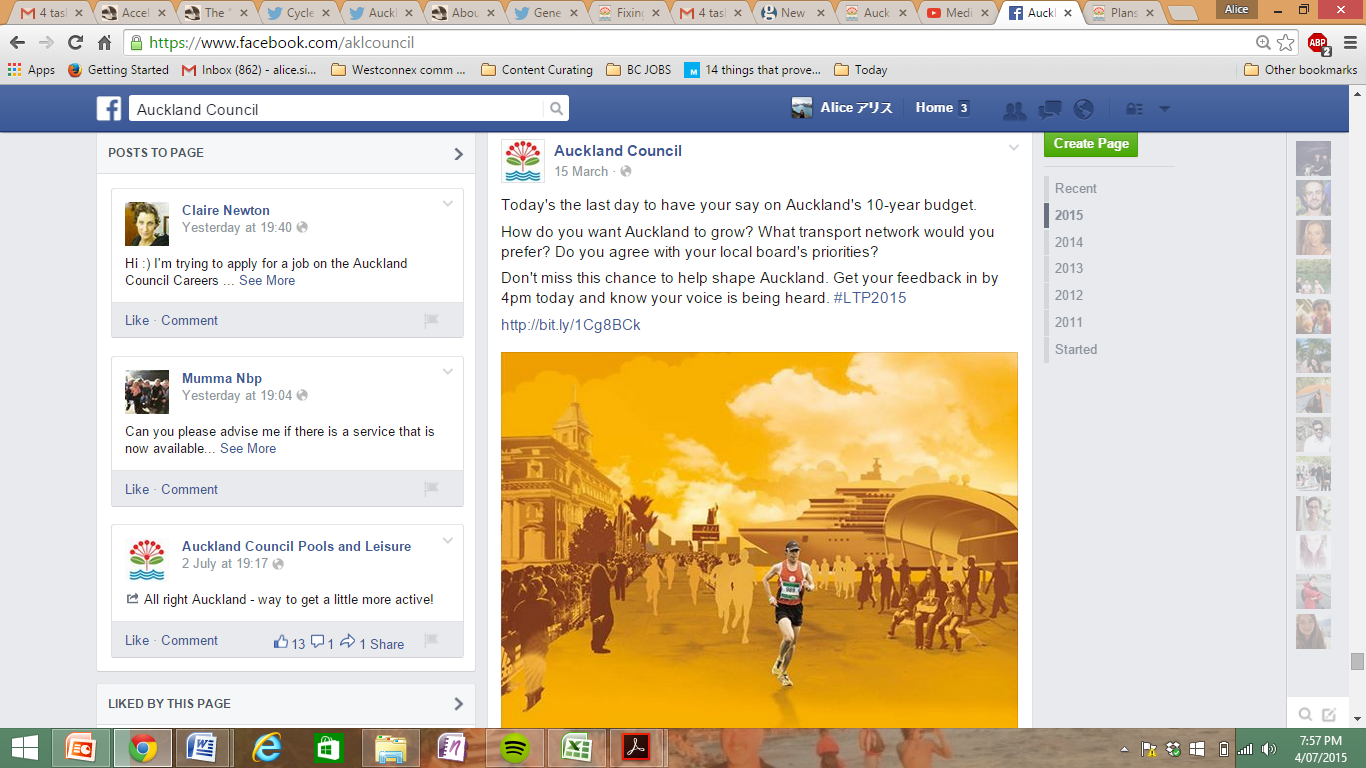
* Raise awareness around the Council’s LTP
* Gather views from Aucklanders on important options and issues
* Adhere to engagement statutory requirements
* Improve the public’s trust in Council’s decision-making processes.

## Engagement

### Overview

The community consultation ran for a period of 7.5 weeks from the 23 January until the 16 March 2015 through a variety of online and offline methods, aimed at reaching a diverse group of people.

[Shape Auckland](http://www.shapeauckland.co.nz) – Council’s online engagement hub - was the central place for information and online engagement. Paid media and social media were used to raise awareness and invite input during the consultation period including:

* Print advertising, press releases, Features stories, onboard transport newsletters, radio advertising, posters and TV interviews amounting to:
  + 65 station advertisements across bus shelters and train stations
  + 7,000 flyers, posters and postcards were distributed
  + 161 press advertisements
  + 22 press releases
  + 50 interviews
* Promotional content through Council-owned social media channels
* Social media outreach program, connecting with influential social media users to amplify Council communications
* Paid online media.

Feedback on the draft was invited through:

* Online feedback forms on the [Shape Auckland website](http://www.shapeauckland.co.nz)
* Emails
* Written submissions and letters
* Hard copy feedback forms that could be posted, scanned or emailed to   
  the Council
* Council facilitated community events
* Social media.

### Online engagement

The Shape Auckland engagement hub was the central place for information and online engagement. Through the hub, individuals could read all current and previous LTP materials, comment on blogs on key topics, watch an explanatory video, share content via their own social media channels, and provide their feedback.

Aucklanders could provide feedback via social media channels by:

* a designated Facebook page ([facebook.com/aklcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/aklcouncil))
* on Twitter, using both @aklcouncil and #LTP2015
* in the comments section of the [Shape Auckland](http://www.shapeauckland.co.nz) blog
* participating in an online live chat through the Buzzchanel online discussion tool.

The live online chat offered the chance for community members to discuss key topics with each other and present their point of view. Council subject matter experts were on hand to provide any clarification required. All commentary from the community was recorded as feedback.

### Offline engagement

Offline engagement methods used included face-to-face meetings, public meetings, the option to print and mail a submission and newspaper advertisements. Council distributed a summary document to 540, 000 households, libraries and offices.

The Council also facilitated [Have Your Say](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/AboutCouncil/HaveYourSay/Pages/Home.aspx?utm_source=shorturl&utm_medium=print&utm_campaign=Have_your_say) events across Auckland, with a total of 2,300 attendees, including:

* 21 stalls at events, markets and tertiary institutions
* 21 visits/workshops with community groups, churches and businesses
* 56 local engagement activities reaching around 900 attendees
* Promotional material handed out at transport hubs
* [Britomart transport choice lanes](https://www.facebook.com/aklcouncil/photos/a.154693724578633.26822.150683774979628/809049915809674/): this was a street activity to raise awareness of a critical consultation topic, and gave members of the public the chance to vote with their feet and be counted as they walked through one lane rather than another
* Targeted stakeholder communications to over 28,000 individuals / groups including:
  + The [Peoples Panel](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/AboutCouncil/HaveYourSay/Pages/PeoplesPanel.aspx?utm_source=shorturl&utm_medium=print&utm_campaign=Peoples_Panel)
  + Council’s existing database of interested Aucklanders
  + Direct communications with hard to reach groups including those with disabilities, non-English speakers, youth and seniors
  + Public sector agencies
* [Auckland Conversations](http://conversations.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/welcome) event: panel discussion on transport, amplified using live tweeting

Council staff also visited all its housing for the elderly to discuss the proposal during the consultation process.

In addition, the 21 Local Boards of Auckland Council ran meetings to discuss their own budget allocations and address local issues and infrastructure and provide feedback to Council’s Have Your Say questions on regional issues.

### Technology used

* Website –Shape Auckland hub - online engagement methods
* Forms / tools to collect submissions
* Social media – Facebook, Twitter, Live chat
* Feedback Management System
* [Buzzchannel](http://www.buzzchannel.co.nz/) online discussion tool

## Analysis and reporting feedback

After the submission period closed on March 16th feedback was analysed and reported to the project team.

Submissions and feedback forms collected in hard copy and email were entered into the Feedback Management System so feedback could be collated with comments received on the blog, input collected through social media and through the Shape Auckland hub. Feedback collected through the Live Chat were exported into CSV outputs so they could be coded and entered into the Feedback Management System for issues analysis and management.

Feedback received was related to four key themes as outlined in the consultation document including:

1. **Transport:** discussions around the adoption of the Basic transport network or the Auckland Plan transport network and its funding.
2. **Investing in Auckland:** a focus on whether there should be greater or less spending on Council services and the proposed rate changes.
3. **Rates and financial policies:** discussions on where the Uniform Annual General Charge should be set, and how much business should be contributing.
4. **Development Auckland:** asking Aucklanders whether they support the replacement of two existing [Council Controlled Organisations](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/AboutCouncil/representativesbodies/CCO/Pages/Home.aspx) for a new one.

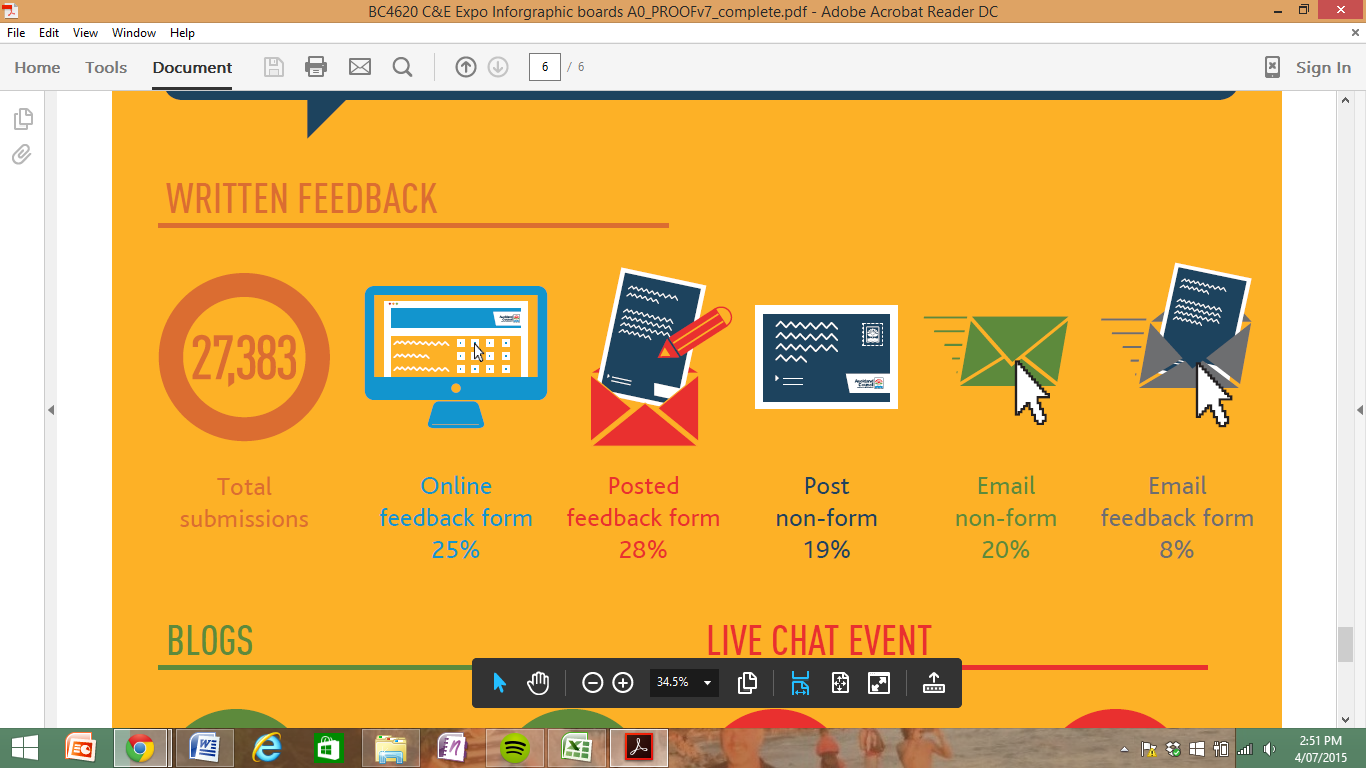
## Outcomes

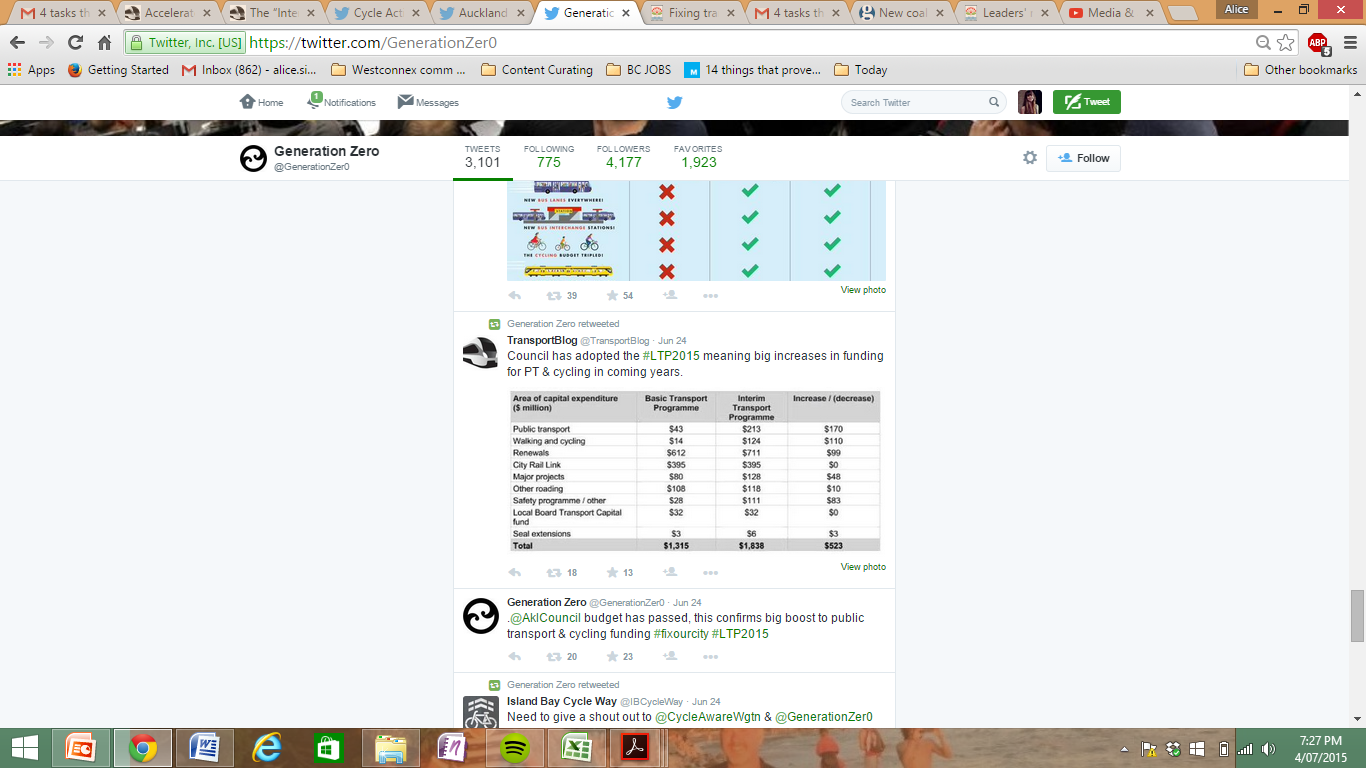
The engagement resulted in the largest ever conversation with Aucklanders: 27,383 people provided over 260,000 points of written feedback.

By mid-March, 54% of Aucklanders were aware of the LTP, which was 20% greater than in November of 2014, but only 1 in 10 participants felt that they were aware of what issues were being discussed in the plan.

The following metrics were also tracked:

* 49 comments were received on the 9 blogs posted by Council
* 1,354 eligible submissions were received through social media (43 people participated in the Live Chat Event with 118 comments noted
* 2,300 people attended Face-to-Face events
* 27, 383 submissions were received including:
  + Online feedback form - 25%
  + Posted feedback form - 28%
  + Post non-form - 19%
  + Email non-form - 20%
  + Email feedback form - 8%



A large social research firm was also engaged to invite a statistically representative sample of 5,000 people to participate in an independent survey after the close of the LTP consultation about transport planning in Auckland. The results from this survey revealed that 58% of Aucklanders supported the Council’s proposed transport network with the majority advocating for a motorway charge to raise funds to implement the changes. These results along with feedback from the LTP consultation went into the decision to introduce a transport levy for the next 3 years while a more long-term solution is discussed. This decision to have greater investment in public transport and cycle lanes was welcomed on in social media by organisations like [Generation Zero](http://www.generationzero.org/) and [Cycle Action](http://caa.org.nz/).

The [final plan](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/EN/planspoliciesprojects/plansstrategies/longtermplan2015/Pages/home.aspx) was adopted by the Governing Body on 25 June 2015 and reflects the decisions made by Council in May and June 2015. Summaries of feedback were published on the Council’s website with the final full list of capital spending, rates guide and summary of decisions also accessible online. An overview of the budgets and these proposed changes for each area of Council activity is set out, along with common feedback themes and relevant Council decisions made by Council. These decisions are reflected in the average general rates increases agreed on.

All households were also sent a consultation summary along with an insert pertaining to local issues. Activity to close the consultation loop with Aucklanders were held after the release of these documents and hard copies of the full 10-year budget were made available in all libraries, service centres and local board offices.

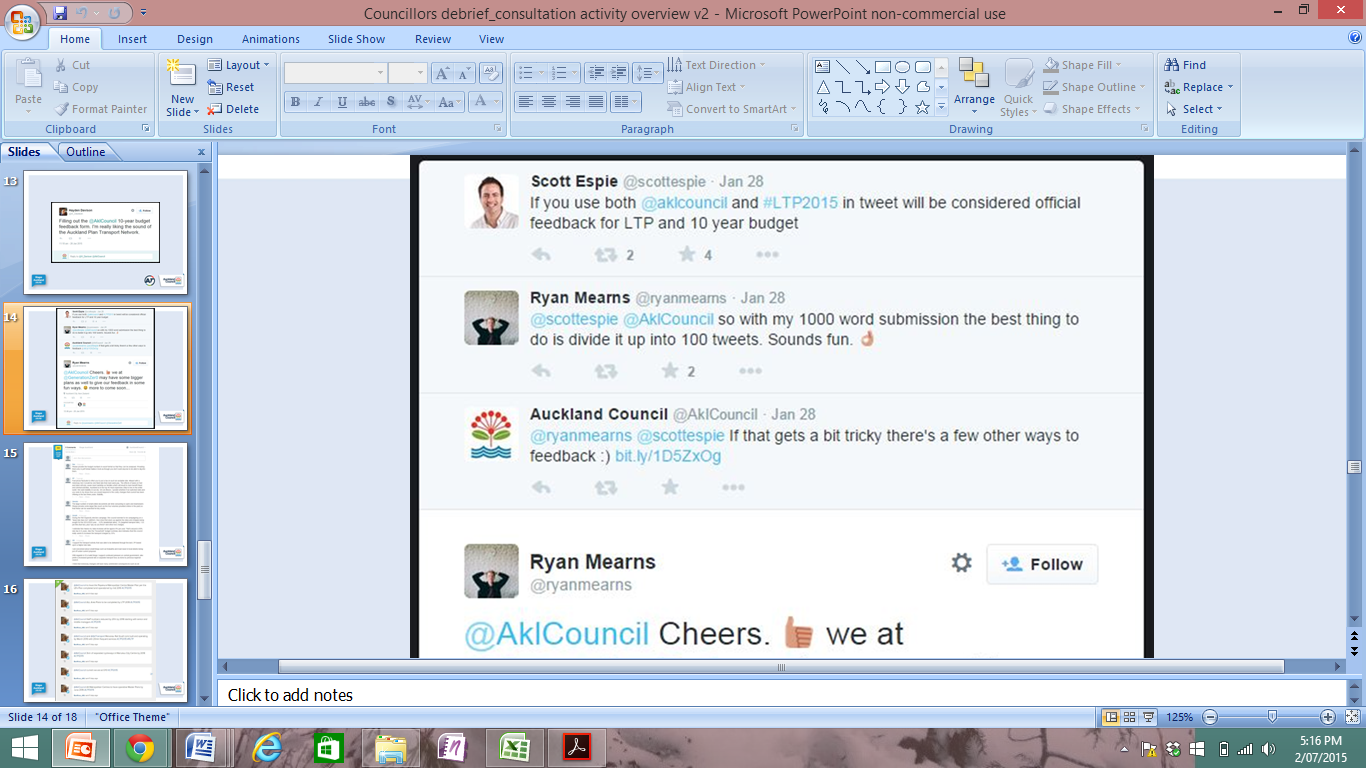
## Lessons learned

* Promote the consultation period early to:
  + reach a wider audience including more diverse demographics
  + ensure time for groups to understand and discuss the topics with their members so they can provide an informed contribution
  + empower stakeholders to promote the consultation.
* Allow for more planning time to distribute documents and share the summary document with households.
* Video is a powerful engagement medium and provides great reach via shareable content
* Online tools (such as live chat, internal message boards etc) can certainly be effective but require pre-planning like any other activity
* Promotion of online methods to engage are critical for them to be effective
* Encourage [three-way engagement](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/key-terms/) by publishing comments and enabling participants to comment on each other’s comments. This exposes the community to a variety of issues and opinions, not just the views of Council, putting individual comments in perspective.
* Hold large face-to-face events instead of multiple small ones to minimize costs and prevent large amount of travel outside of work hours for Council staff.
* Encourage councilors to provide input on the event plan before implementation, to allow for optimisation .
* Off-the-shelf Live Chat tools can provide basic functional requirements which include:
  + Real time chat threads
  + Ability to queue questions and delegate certain individuals to answer questions
  + Allowing questions from various platforms (social media, SMS) to integrate on the one, easy to manage site
  + Ability to share the Live Chat on social media
  + Sharing and integrating documents and images into the chat
  + Ensuring the Live Chat was branded as Shape Auckland
  + Completing the process with CSV output to record all details.

## Observations

* Thin methods with low barriers to participation increased the volume of feedback received. This includes allowing anonymous sign ups to the Live Chat.
* Feedback received on Twitter was considered a formal submission to Council.
* Council demonstrated Open Government, particularly the principles of transparency and accountability by publishing comments, feedback and deliberation reports, and how they were addressing the issues raised. All submissions across all channels are currently posted online.
* The LTP engagement process satisfies some of the outcomes outlined in the [Kia Tutahi Relationship Accord](http://www.dia.govt.nz/KiaTutahi).

The key learnings from the LTP consultation process are now being used to shape how we design public consultation processes going forward. This will ensure Auckland Council delivers a better experience for participants and improves how their feedback informs decision making.



# Definitions of key engagement terms

**Community and stakeholder engagement** is a process of involving people and encouraging their participation in improving how government works.

**Community** refers to a group of individuals who share common characteristics like the area they live or work in, their interests and beliefs or profession. For the purposes of this guide community engagement will also include the engagement of individuals.

**Consultation** is a process designed to present information, often a draft document, and invite feedback on proposed changes within a defined period of time before a decision has to be made. Governments typically release draft plans, proposals or policies as documents for consultation and invite feedback on the proposed changes in the form of submissions over a four- to six-week period. Consultation is required by some New Zealand legislation in with formal notification, submissions and hearing processes.

A **Stakeholder** is someone who has an interest in, or will be impacted or affected by a proposed change. This includes the whole range of people from impacted individuals, communities and groups, to knowledgeable experts, implementers and those who will be held ultimately responsible, e.g. Chief Executives, Ministers, etc.

**Engagement** is a two-way or three-way communication that generates information and builds relationships. It is a more general term than consultation and is used to describe the activity rather than a required process. Engagement can happen before, during or after consultation and can be ongoing. The questions and topics open for discussion during engagement are usually broader than those posed during consultation, enabling agencies to listen, understand and consider stakeholder issues, concerns and suggestions.

The term **online engagement** means different things to different people and professions. For example to a Website Manager online engagement is interaction with the website interface, to a Customer Service Manager it refers to clicks per transaction, and to a Social Media or Marketing Manager it's about reach and movement of traffic.

For the purposes of this Guide the term **online engagement** will mean **the use of technology by Government to encourage community and stakeholders to participate in two- or three-way communication online**.

**Two-way engagement** is the process of sharing information and inviting others to provide feedback on it. Submissions or input received in other forms may be published but participants cannot like, share or comment on another participant's feedback.

**Three-way engagement** is the process of sharing information so others can comment or make submissions on it, then publishing that feedback so participants can reply to, like, share or comment on each other’s input.

**Closed engagement** is an engagement where only invited stakeholders can participate.

**Open engagement** is an engagement where anyone can view or participate.

# Planning your online engagement

In this section:

* [Developing your engagement strategy](#_Developing_your_engagement)
* [Identifying your stakeholders and their needs](#_Identifying_your_stakeholders)
* [Designing your online engagement approach](#_Designing_your_online)

## 

## Developing your engagement strategy

Your strategy will be iteratively developed as you work through the planning stages. It will be invaluable when it comes to planning how you will engage your stakeholders and when selecting the right tools.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Set clear expectations**

Set expectations about the purpose of the engagement and how much influence people will have over the outcomes.

**Plan and prepare carefully**

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that engagement serves both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

You can use the [strategy template](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/engagement-strategy-template/) to develop your engagement strategy.

To start developing your strategy you will need to:

* [Confirm your mandate](#_Confirm_your_mandate_1)
* [Define your engagement objectives](#_Define_your_engagement)
* [Define your metrics of success](#_Define_your_metrics)
* [Determine project resourcing](#_Determine_project_resourcing)
* [Determine your budget for engagement](#_Determine_the_budget)
* [Determine your timeline for engagement](#_Determine_your_timeline)
* [Prepare to manage risks and issues](#_Prepare_to_manage_1)

### Confirm your mandate

Your mandate is an official authority, or commission, to carry out your engagement in line with your policy and the approach outlined in your strategy. Your executive needs to give this authority.

Respectful engagement has purpose. When we invite someone to engage with us, we are asking them to invest their time to participate in our process and give their attention to the information we share. We are also investing our time and resources so we can give them our attention. It is reasonable for our stakeholders to expect a clear explanation of why we are engaging, what kind of participation we expect and what they can expect from us.

Confirming your mandate for online engagement is critical for respectful engagement.

A clear mandate should convey your engagement’s:

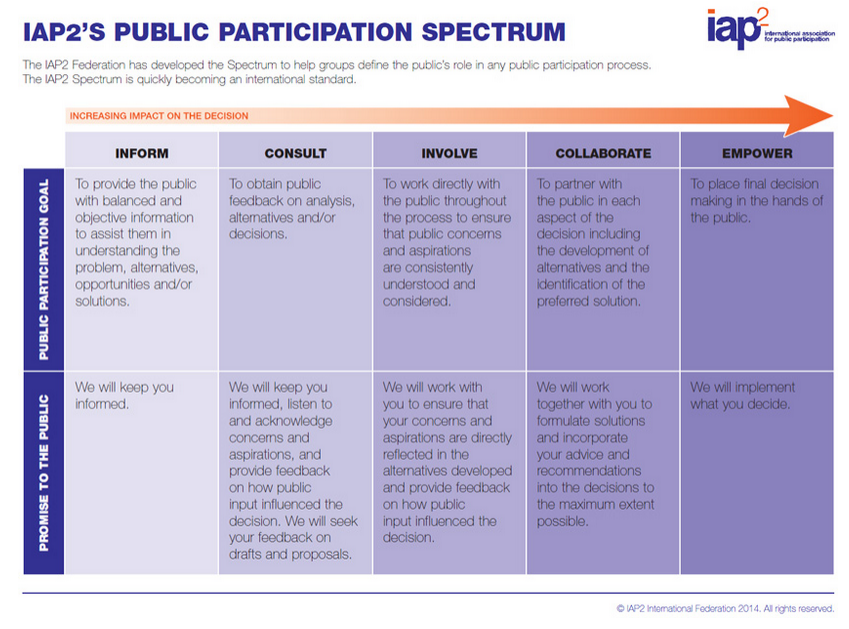
* purpose and approach
* policies and procedures that you will apply when engaging
* intent on how you will use your stakeholder’s input.

Articulating a clear mandate will help:

* manage reputational risks, participant expectations and stakeholder relations
* improve your user experience
* in the delivery of your objectives.

The [International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)](http://www.iap2.org/) refers to the mandate as a '[promise to the public](http://www.iap2.org.au/about-us/about/core-values)'. The promise to the public tells how government will use the public's input in the decision making process. IAP2 developed the Public Participation Spectrum to show how the purpose of engagement and the level of public participation relate to a promise to the public.

We recommend using the spectrum to confirm your mandate for engagement with others in your organisation.



#### Define your purpose for engaging

The IAP2 Spectrum defines five reasons why you may want to engage, to either:

* inform
* consult
* involve
* collaborate
* empower.

Each reason invites varying degrees of participation, input and level of engagement. Where you are in the process and who you are engaging with, will influence your reason to engage. For example, you may:

* engage to inform or involve certain stakeholders in your process before consulting
* collaborate with stakeholders to deliver outcomes after a consultation has closed.

Openly engaging early and continuously, and being transparent about the process can:

* inform policy development and planning
* help you tailor policy, programmes and services to meet user needs
* improve the effectiveness of consultation and service delivery
* enhance communications
* identify stakeholders and scope potential social, environmental and economic issues
* build trust in Government
* raise awareness about challenges
* provide useful inputs into options
* gain insights into community values and priorities
* enable agencies to track and manage issues
* build relationships and deliver better public services
* increase the effectiveness and acceptance of proposed changes.

#### Develop your engagement policy

An ‘engagement policy’ is the standard you apply when engaging. It defines the principles and rules of engagement for you and your stakeholders. It also provides a basis for your engagement strategy and ensures your project mandate and engagement principles are endorsed and implemented.

While developing this guide, we engaged our community of practice to help define a set of [principles for online engagement](#_Principles_of_engagement). These principles align with the [Kia Tutahi](http://www.dia.govt.nz/KiaTutahi) standing together agreement. Together they are a great place to start when defining your mandate and subsequent policies and procedures for engagement.

Your engagement policy should cover:

* accordance with the [online engagement principles](#_Principles_of_engagement) and the [Open Government Partnership Declaration](http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/open-government-declaration) , e.g. inclusion, transparency and accountability
* stakeholder definition, approach to include them and why
* types of engagement techniques you will use including how you will gather input
* how you will use tools like social media and discussion forums to engage
* your moderation approach
* how privacy requirements will be applied to information collected
* how information will be collected, collated, managed, analysed and published including assessing if can be released as anonymised, aggregated ‘high value public data’ under the [Declaration on Open and Transparent Government](https://www.ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/open-government/declaration-open-and-transparent-government/)
* a response policy including:
  + how and when you will respond to enquiries, questions and issues
  + what reporting internally and publicly will be provided.

We recommend each agency develop its own overall policy for engagement which can be tailored to fit with the mandate of specific engagement projects.

Agency engagement policies can be published to:

* show a commitment to transparency, increase trust and encourage constructive participation
* help stakeholders understand the terms of their engagement
* manage stakeholder expectations.

Example of a transparent engagement policy: [NZ Transport Authority stakeholder and community engagement policy](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/public-engagement-manual/pem.html).

### Define your engagement objectives

Engagement objectives are statements that define why you are engaging and what you hope to get out of the process. They will also help you decide who to engage and the best way to engage with them.

Try and make your objectives SMART:

* Specific – target a specific area for improvement, explain why you are engaging
* Measurable – quantify what you hope to get out of the process
* Assignable – specify who will do it
* Realistic – state what results can realistically be achieved within given constraints (available resources, expertise, time, budget, etc)
* Time-related –specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

Your objectives should reflect:

* your engagement purpose and policy
* the type and degree of engagement you’re hoping to achieve at each phase.

Define your engagement objectives, outputs and deliverables early so that people will understand:

* what is expected of them
* how engagement will contribute to the successful delivery of the project.

Then you will know:

* what is practical and achievable within the budget and resources you have
* the skills and methods needed.

To define your objectives, it may help to answer the following questions:

#### Context

* How does this engagement fit with your legislative context?
* How does this engagement fit into your organisation's objectives and its relationships with these stakeholders?
* How does engagement support or fit with Government objectives more generally for example:
  + Does it align with the Better Public Services objectives?
  + Is it customer- or citizen-centric enough?
  + Does it help meet the Open Government Partnership principles, of transparency, accountability and civic participation?
  + Are you using or reusing Open Data (under the [Declaration on Open and Transparent Government](https://www.ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/open-government/declaration-open-and-transparent-government/)? Should you?

#### Decision points

* At what stage of your process will a decision be made?
* Who is making it – and how will they consider information gathered through engagement?
* What is on the table for discussion? What is open for negotiation? What is non-negotiable?
* At what point in the process will you let stakeholders know a decision has been made, and report back to them how their input has been used?
* Do your stakeholders have to make decisions too?

#### Project stages – phases of engagement

* How will engagement support the delivery of project milestones?
* Will all stakeholders be engaged at all stages of the project?

See the section on [engagement project phases](#_Consider_the_engagement)

#### Degrees of engagement

* How will different levels and engagement methods support the delivery of project milestones?
* Will all stakeholders be engaged at all stages of the project?

See the section on the [levels and methods of participation](#_Determine_the_level)

#### Consultation or engagement - building relations and communities

* Are you gathering feedback on a proposal or input into a draft?
* Will you continue engaging with stakeholders after the consultation? Why? How?
* What kind of relationship do you want to have with the stakeholders you are engaging long term?
* Will you continue to manage the page, group, website and the relationships or community created? How?

#### Type of engagement – participation, representation, deliberation

* Will your engagement be open (public) or closed (by invitation only)?
* Do you want a large number of citizens to participate or are you hoping to engage a representative sample of the population? Are you sure you don’t need both?
* How will you reach the stakeholders who are most affected?
* Do you want to encourage participants to read content or others' comments before sharing their thoughts? How will you encourage informed feedback?
* Will you value input from different stakeholders differently?

See the sections on the [types of engagement](#_Consider_what_type).

#### Information required

* What are your questions for engagement?
* What do you need your stakeholders to understand before they respond to these questions? How will you tell this story?
* Are you engaging to understand and measure potential impacts?

See the section on [communicating for online engagement](#_Communicating_for_online)

### Define your metrics of success

It can be helpful when developing objectives to define success and work backwards. What would success look like? For example, are you hoping to achieve a high degree of participation or reach a representative sample of the population? Is the quality of inputs more important than quantity?

Developing clear metrics for success at the start of a project:

* ensures focus for your engagement approach
* helps with managing expectations
* enables measurement so resources can be redistributed as needed to ensure effectiveness.

Your metrics should be reported against your objectives as measures of success.

The following metrics are a good starting point to track and improve effectiveness of your online engagement:

* Visitors to your channels:
  + Reach – new and repeat
  + Who are they – can you find out the demographics?
  + Where did they come from? Both by geography and referral (what website they came from)
  + How long did they stay on your page?
* Participation:
  + Rates of conversion – what proportion of them did what you wanted them to do?
  + How did people participate – did they view content? Comment? View others comments? Up or down vote others comments?
  + Was content shared?
* Input
  + Quality of feedback gathered. What kind of feedback are you getting? Is it useful / relevant? Does it demonstrate awareness? Does up or down voting give enough of an indication of what the majority of people think?
  + Quantity of input gathered. How much input? All new stakeholders / users or are they expected participants?
* The user journey
  + It is working? Are users engaging the way you hoped? E.g. are they reading content? Are they participating where/how you need them to?
  + Are you on track in your process?

We also recommend reviewing the metrics section in the US Government's [Public Participation Playbook](http://participation.usa.gov/) when setting your metrics for success.

Also see the metric used by Wellington City Council in their [case study](#_Case_Study:_Wellington_1).

### Determine project resourcing

The resources you need to help deliver your approach will be defined by:

* your [engagement strategy](#_Developing_your_engagement_1), particularly the methods you will use and the associated skills required to deliver your approach
* the rate of participation in online engagement by the public.

The number of resources you will need depends on the size and profile of the project. At a minimum you will need a Senior Responsible Officer and a Project Manager. Each person in the project team can take on multiple roles if they have the right skills.

Senior Responsible Officer (SRO):

* Champions and governs the project.
* Provides sign-off/endorsement of key project deliverables, e.g. mandate, policy, strategy, issues and risk management plan, reports, etc.
* Supports the Project Manager to deliver the project.

Project Manager:

* Manages the project team, budget, and timeline.
* Reports project progress to the SRO.
* Ensures the SRO understands the strategy, response policy and how risks and issues will be managed.
* Discuss and accounts for scalable resources and defines triggers for when they might be required with the team.

Project Team:

* Advises the Project Manager if procedures can be improved and if they think they may need support
* Works to cultivate community and moderate forums around the clock.
* Delivers multiple offline engagement events.

Key roles in the project team are:

Engagement Lead / Online Community Manager:

* Holds the project team to a principles based approach to engagement.
* Drafts the engagement mandate, strategy, policy, etc.
* Selects the methods and tools for engagement, though discussion with the project team and other agency groups including:
  + Information Communications Technology
  + Privacy
  + Information and Records Management
  + Legal
  + Audit
  + Democracy teams (if you are in local government)
* Depending on the project, approves content.
* Facilitates online response, e.g. discussion forums.
* Responsible for promotion, Social Media planning and response.

Subject Matter Expert (SME):

* Provides knowledge of key stakeholders and history of related initiatives and issues.
* Writes draft content for online engagement.
* Analyses submissions and drafts reports.

Content Editor:

* Reshapes draft content from SME for online consumption.
* Provides reports on online participation analytics.

Technical support:

* Establishes your online platform(s).
* Ensures the smooth running of the online platform(s).

### Determine your budget for online engagement

If you need to engage with more than a few people then you will need to allocate a budget for communication, engagement, and promotion. You may even need to hire additional resources to cover the roles/skills you don’t have ready access to. Check with your agency’s financial rules to work out which costs are Capital or Operational expenditure.

Your online engagement budget may need to cover things like:

* marketing – online and offline
* engagement strategy development
* social media strategy development and/or resourcing
* content development
* legal advice
* requirements gathering
* selection and configuration of tools
* online engagement tool procurement/development and security accreditation
* technical service provision, e.g. website development and system integration, and ongoing technical support.

### Determine your timeline for engagement

Your online engagement will take a minimum of 9 weeks depending on your organisation’s processes for technology selection, procurement and establishment, and depending on how many stakeholder submissions you need to analyse.

Allow a **minimum** of:

* 3 weeks (ideally 4) to develop your strategy and approach, gather requirements, select and configure tools
* 4 weeks for stakeholder engagement. This needs to be sufficiently long enough so people can be notified and provide considered responses
* 2 weeks for analysis, reporting and closing the feedback loop.

### Prepare to manage risks and issues

Having a clear mandate and strategy will help mitigate risks. To help manage those risks, you should develop an Issue and Risk Management Procedure (IRMP) for engagement. Some risks are predictable.

An IRMP should:

* map potential scenarios
* outline responses to foreseeable issues.

And will include clear processes to:

* monitor online channels, communities and content shared
* alert key staff of any issues or opportunities
* agree an approach to respond as soon as practical.

Before the engagement starts, you must provide channel and online community managers with:

* the [guide on how to handle a social media mishap](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/social-media/how-to-handle-a-mishap/)
* an agreed response policy
* key messages
* reference material.

To ensure consistent response and support ongoing engagement you should:

* use a risk register to track unforeseen issues
* evaluate and manage risk in real-time using agreed processes
* add responses to new issues raised to your published content where appropriate.

Some risks are predictable and you can prepare for them, others will require an informed reaction. Draft content can be prepared to assist with responses to potential questions and issues. See more on ‘responsive content’ under the section on [making your content engaging](#_Make_your_content).

## Identifying your stakeholders and their needs

A **stakeholder** is someone who has an interest in, or will be impacted or affected by a proposed change. This includes the whole range of people from impacted individuals, communities and groups, to knowledgeable experts, implementers and those who will be held ultimately responsible, e.g. Chief Executives, Ministers, etc.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Be inclusive and   
reflect diversity**

Include a wide range of people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for results that reflect the views of all stakeholders.

**Honour the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti O Waitangi**

Tangata Whenua and TangataTīrīti work together to protect our respective rights and uphold our responsibilities to realise common and distinctive aspirations for increasing and improving fair and active participation.

To identify your stakeholders and their needs you will need to:

* [Conduct a stakeholder analysis](#_Conduct_a_stakeholder)
* [Determine if your stakeholders have been engaged before](#_Determine_if_your)
* [Create a profile of your target community](#_Create_a_profile)
* [Consider the social, technical and political context](#_Consider_the_social,)
* [Conduct research to understand stakeholder issues and needs](#_Conduct_research_to)
* [Consider how you are going to reach stakeholders online and offline](#_Consider_how_you)

### Conduct a stakeholder analysis

Stakeholder analysis involves identifying and defining types of stakeholders, mapping their interests and determining the best stakeholder engagement strategy to use.

Stakeholder analysis helps to identify:

* an overall picture of who is involved and how
* the interests of stakeholders in relation to the project’s objective(s)
* which stakeholders will be directly affected by the engagement outcome
* which stakeholders could directly affect the engagement outcome
* any potential conflicts of interest
* the needs of your target community and stakeholders
* the context you are engaging in
* how best to reach and engage with your stakeholders

It is especially useful if your objective is to reach a targeted network of stakeholders and invite them to participate in your engagement.

Key questions to answer for each stakeholder:

* What is their interest/how will they be impacted and how much?
* What is the benefit *to the project* of their engagement?
* What is the benefit *to the stakeholder* of their engagement?
* What is their level of influence over the project outcomes?
* What is their level of influence over other stakeholders’ views?
* What is their history of engagement?
* What do you think is their likely level of support for the project objectives?
* What do you need from them?
* What do they need from you?
* What is the risk of engaging or not engaging with them?
* How can you lower the barriers to their engagement?
* Who else has recently or is currently engaging with them and how might this impact their engagement with you?

You can then use the interest/impact, benefits, influence, and risks for each stakeholder to help you determine how best to manage your engagement with them.

You should also consider how your engagement approach needs to change over time for each stakeholder as they become more or less engaged.

### Determine if your stakeholders have been engaged before

We recommend talking to others who may have engaged with your stakeholder in the past.

Do this to:

* understand the history and status of your organisation's relationship with the stakeholder
* understand their interests and issues that have gone unresolved
* demonstrate that your agency has been listening
* ensure you are aware of unresolved issues
* reduce risk, build trust and increase the likelihood of an effective engagement

You should maintain records of your contact and communications with stakeholders to:

* make it easier for others engaging stakeholders on behalf of your agency in future
* ensure corporate knowledge is retained
* ensure issues are addressed
* retain the value of investment made by you and your stakeholders

A stakeholder management system will help you maintain such records.

### Create a profile of your target community

Community profiling can give more context to your stakeholder analysis. It will provide a demographic snapshot of the geographic area of the project. You can profile the community using [census data](http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census.aspx).

If you are engaging openly but trying to reach a representative sample of the population you can use your profiles to determine whether the people who have engaged represent the community.  You can then adapt your approach to ensure you reach those who have not yet participated.

### Consider the social, technical, economic and political context

When you are engaging your stakeholders, it’s important to consider the social, technical, economic and political (STEP) context. STEP is concept developed by the World Bank citizen engagement team.

You should consider questions such as:

* Are there any social and economic issues you should be aware of?
* Do you need to take into account literacy, language or cultural considerations?
* Is there any political sensitivity around the topic you are discussing?
* How technical are your stakeholders?
* Will they be able to access the internet and online tools for engagement?
* How can you help them engage?

The [2006 Adult Literacy and Life Skills](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/research/all) (ALL) Survey found that 44% of employed New Zealanders had low levels of literacy (measured as Level 1 or 2). If you are engaging in areas with low levels of literacy and diverse languages and cultures, consider speaking to local educational institutions, community and cultural groups about the best ways to communicate, reach and engage individuals and social networks in that community.

### Conduct research to understand stakeholder issues and needs

Be aware that not all engagement will be though channels that you control. Stakeholders will have their own channels and will engage on the topic independently of your engagement activity. It pays to actively listen to what is being said about your topic before, during and after your engagement project.

“Listening online” is the use of specialist tools to monitor and report on data. You can listen online at any point in time with a review of hashtags, keywords and locations. The configuration of specialist monitoring and reporting tools will help you monitor and report on the huge volumes of data online that will be available.

Using the right tools to monitor and analyse ‘big data’, you’ll get a deeper appreciation of local and regional issues and needs. You will also gain more insight about how to tailor communication, programs and services for your community and specific stakeholder groups.

### Consider how you are going to reach stakeholders online and offline

Online and offline social and professional networks enable us to find others with common interests, so we can share ideas and information. Mapping these relationships and content online will help you identify creative ways to reach your stakeholders and earn trust and referral. It can also help you understand social influence, political context and potential risks.

## Designing your online engagement approach

Your engagement approach is a high-level description of how you will engage. It describes how you will use various communication and engagement methods to reach your objectives. It’s about designing the engagement journey you will take your stakeholders on and how as a team you will manage the process.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Build trust through transparency and responsiveness**

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed. Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.

**Encourage collaboration**

Support and encourage people, the public sector, community groups and others to work together to improve government.

**Encourage openness   
and learning**

Create a safe environment to explore new ideas, learn and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively and make sure engagement is effective and relevant.

To design your online engagement approach you will need to:

* [Consider the engagement project phases](#_Consider_the_engagement)
* [Consider the stakeholders’ journey](#_Consider_the_stakeholders’)
* [Determine the type of engagement](#_Determine_the_type)
* [Consider the implications of formal, informal and social input](#_Consider_the_implications)
* [Determine the level and methods of participation](#_Determine_how_much)
* [Clarify if you will collect quantitative or qualitative data](#_Clarify_if_you)
* [Consider how you will integrate online and offline engagement methods](#_Consider_how_you_1)

### Consider the engagement project phases

A typical consultation project will have at least four engagement phases:

1. **Planning the project**

Developing a mandate, policy and strategy for engagement, identifying stakeholders and preparing to promote activities and recruit participants

1. **Launching the project**

Raising awareness, promoting engagement opportunities, recruiting participants

1. **Engagement**

Collecting input, monitoring participation, refining recruitment, implement systems for ongoing communications and project promotion

1. **Close engagement**

‘Close the loop’ by providing a summary of feedback received and project outcomes

Each phase often has its own objectives and requires different engagement methods or degrees of engagement to achieve them. You may engage some stakeholders differently depending on the phase and objectives of your engagement. For example, you may work closely through the launch, engagement and close phases of an engagement process with a stakeholder who is affected by a proposed change to minimise impacts.

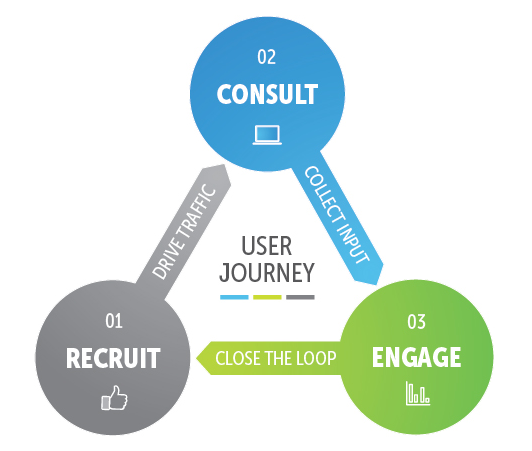
We recommend developing a process diagram to help explain the different phases of engagement, and how you would like your stakeholders to engage throughout your project.

### Consider the stakeholders’ journey

The **user journey** refers to the process you would like your user or stakeholders to go through when engaging them online or offline.

In engagement the user journey can be thought of as how you will:

* recruit your stakeholders and get them involved
* direct them on what to do
* keep them engaged or close the loop.



Mapping your stakeholder’s user journey can help:

* further define objectives
* select the appropriate methods for engagement and
* select the best approach to manage stakeholder relations
* track the progress and success of your engagement by defining them as a metric
* ensure online and offline stakeholder engagement methods are integrated if you include both in your user journeys.

### Determine the type of engagement

There are 3 types of engagement to consider:

1. **Participation** – is an open type of engagement process where anyone can view or participate in the engagement. Participants are recruited through broadcasted communications or promotion of engagement through networks.
2. **Representation** – where participants are demographically or culturally representative, or they represent different points of view (discursive representation).
3. **Deliberation** – this means encouraging participants to consider content and/or others views before they form and share their thoughts.

You should match the type of engagement to your:

* mandate
* phases of engagement and objectives
* stakeholders
* methods.

If your mandate is an open, transparent and participatory process but you want to ensure diverse representation, you can invite stakeholders that hold different views and fit different demographics to participate. To do this you need to collect demographic data and progressively evaluate who is participating. Look at where they come from and the diversity of views received against your metrics of success. With this knowledge you can progressively refine your approach.

We recommend engaging with your stakeholders using participation and deliberation when your consultation is required under legislation.

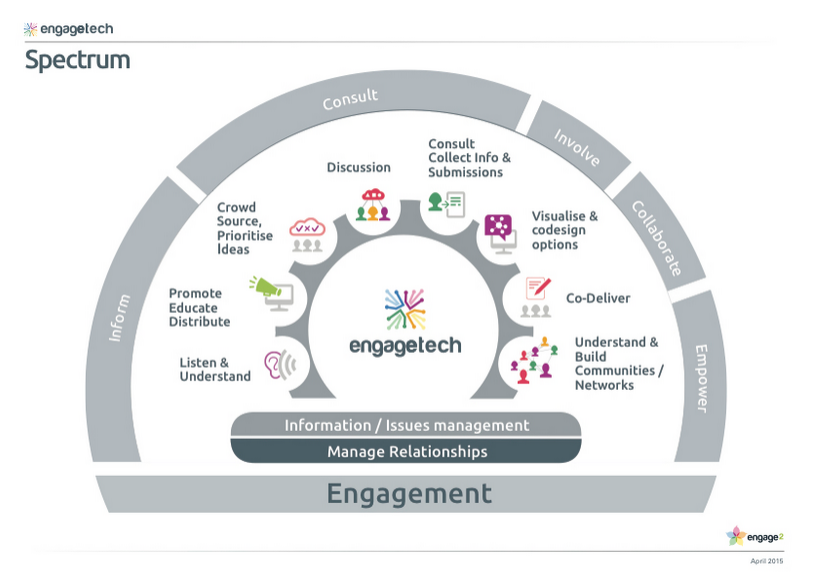
If your mandate is only to engage with a representative sample of the population you can run a closed engagement. Participants can be recruited through a random selection process or targeted specifically. When recruiting through a random selection process, we recommend that an independent qualified body, like a research vendor, be employed to ensure your methodology is accurate and defensible.

### Consider the implications of formal, informal and social input

Formal consultation is required under a number of pieces of legislation in New Zealand. You may need to verify whether the input you gather through online engagement will be treated as formal or informal. There is debate about whether input gathered through online tools should be treated as formal or informal submission. Feedback collected through informal social methods is, in some cases, treated as sentiment rather than a submission.

### Determine the level and methods of participation

You need to think about how much participation you expect from your stakeholders at every stage of the process. Depending on your objectives you may have different degrees of engagement with different stakeholders during different engagement phases. The IAP2 Spectrum[link to image under ‘Confirm your mandate’]is a useful to tool to define how much participation you expect. The following ‘engagetech’ engagement spectrum will help match your engagement purpose to the various methods available to engage online. It was developed by engage2 using the IAP2 spectrum. You can also use this tool in combination with information contained in the section on [selecting the right tools for online engagement](#_Selecting_the_right).



There are several methods to consider when thinking about how much participation you want. Methods need to be matched to your mandate, objectives and the degree of engagement needed from different stakeholders during different engagement phases.

Each method will result in different levels of participation, which will influence the type of information you collect.

* two-way engagement
* three-way engagement
* thin methods
* thick methods
* online and offline.

To help define how much participation you want, think about:

* if you want it to be easy to comment or for them to consider content before they participate
* whether two-way or three-way engagement is the best choice and how will you encourage this
* what you want stakeholders to do: share an idea, a story or provide you with input
* do you want stakeholders to interact with each other by ‘liking’, voting, prioritising or discussing views
* how you will participate and keep your stakeholders engaged throughout your process, e.g. by facilitating online discussion
* how these activities will support your offline engagement as well as other methods to engage online
* how to encourage stakeholders to come back to your channels so you can tell your story, collect information and track participation.

#### ****Two-way engagement****

Two-way engagement is the process of sharing information and inviting others to provide feedback on it. Submissions or input received in other forms may be published but participants cannot like, share or comment on another participant's feedback.

#### ****Three-way engagement****

Three-way engagement is the process of sharing information so others can comment or make submissions on it, then publishing that feedback so participants can reply to, like, share or comment on each other’s input.

#### ****Thin methods****

‘Thin’ methods provide an easy and fast way for participants to add ideas, vote or comment and include:

* inviting input via social media
* crowd-sourcing
* idea generation
* using prioritisation tools.

Thin methods have little barrier to engagement because they do not require participants to:

* engage with content
* register to participate
* provide responses to questions.

You can use thin methods to encourage your stakeholders to come back to your channels, so you can engage them in the consultation in more depth, collect their input and track participation.

#### ****Thick methods****

‘Thick’ methods require more participant investment because they encourage participants to view, read and consider content before commenting or sharing their ideas. Participants may also be asked to register to participate.

Thick methods have a higher barrier to engagement and take more time to engage. Incentives can be used to encourage participant engagement.

Thick methods include:

* document-based consultation
* e-learning and
* online games.

Tools for thicker, more deliberative, online engagement are rare and often customised. These tools present content and move the user through a process before inviting them to participate. Some even allow you to track what content has been viewed by participants before they participated.

Deliberative online methods are being trialled alongside thin methods in participatory processes and to complement engagement with representative samples involved in deliberative processes offline such as citizens juries. Thick and thin methods can also be used together at late phases of engagement to encourage informed feedback.

### Clarify if you will collect quantitative or qualitative data

Engagement generates both qualitative and quantitative data.

**Quantitative data** is easy to quantify and report. It is information that can be measured and written down with numbers. It is collected using closed questions, like multiple-choice.

**Qualitative data** is varied in nature. It includes any information that can be captured that is not numerical in nature. Open questions, uploaded submissions and videos are all examples of qualitative data. The data is invaluable, but harder to analyse particularly with large volumes of data. Creating a taxonomy to allocate themes and codes, creating infographics, user profiles and stories are some ways of reporting this information.

### Consider how you will integrate online and offline engagement methods

There are lots of ways to integrate online and offline engagement.

Online and offline methods should mirror each other with questions asked on online platforms the same as questions asked at offline events, and engagement activities online promoted at offline events. You might also wish to create a reporting back process where input gathered online is reported offline and vice versa.

Publishing photos and notes from workshops after face-to-face and offline engagements provides great content for online platforms like blogs, social media or discussion forums.

# Engaging your stakeholders online

In this section:

* [Promoting to and recruiting stakeholders](#_Promoting_to_and)
* [Communicating for online engagement](#_Communicating_for_online)
* [Managing, responding to and sharing feedback](#_Managing,_responding_to)

## Promoting to and recruiting stakeholders

Without sufficient promotion you are not likely to get the level of participation you need. Match the methods of stakeholder recruitment to meet your engagement objectives.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Be inclusive and   
reflect diversity**

Include a wide range of people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for results that reflect the views of all stakeholders.

When promotion to and recruiting stakeholders you will need to:

* [Determine the best ways to recruit your stakeholders](#_Determine_the_best)
* [Use stakeholder databases to recruit participants](#_Use_stakeholder_databases)
* [Use online engagement to recruit participants](#_Use_online_engagement)
* [Use offline engagement to recruit online participants](#_Use_offline_engagement)

### Determine the best ways to recruit your stakeholders

Online engagement can be used to support recruitment for offline engagement and vice versa. The World Bank refers to three ways to recruit participants in engagement:

1. **Broadcast** – promoting open engagement to the population through online and offline advertising, communication and marketing methods.
2. **Network** – using stakeholder and network analysis to identify stakeholders and recruit participants through social networks online and offline. This may be done to increase representation or to target engagement to specific stakeholders because they are most likely to be affected by proposed changes.
3. **Random selection** – profiling the community and inviting a demographically representative sample to participate.

Your approach to recruitment should match your [type of engagement](#_Consider_what_type).

Consider the different ways you might need to promote your engagement during different phases of the project. After the initial launch you will need to use varied methods to boost participation, including reminding people before it closes.

### Use stakeholder databases to recruit participants

Your organisation may have a database of stakeholders who have registered their interests and given consent for future communications and engagement. Where appropriate these stakeholders should be informed of opportunities to engage early, especially when broadcasting engagements or targeting networks.

### Use online engagement to recruit participants

Social media is one way to broadcast engagement opportunities. Social media monitoring can be used to identify networks that have an interest in your topic and how and where they discuss it online. Tailoring content to your stakeholders demonstrates you are listening and can help you get ‘[earned media’](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earned_media) through peer-to-peer sharing. Monitoring social media and analysing big data can help you identify, map and recruit.

### Use offline engagement to recruit online participants

Engaging stakeholders offline is an excellent way to recruit stakeholder types and build relationships with participants. You could do this by:

* a phone call
* dropping into stakeholders at their place of work
* displaying posters, including information in community newsletters
* talking at public displays and events or onsite surveys.

When engaging offline, take a tablet (such as an iPad) with you to:

* collect data and information online
* help you demonstrate and promote opportunities to engage online
* recruit participants onsite.

Doing this will make the collation, analysis and reporting much easier.

Another way to recruit participants and gather input online at offline engagements is to encourage the use of social media and hashtags. Adding a social media icon, hashtag to posters around your community, newsletters distributed and slides at events can encourage online participation.

## Communicating for online engagement

To communicate for online engagement you will need to:

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Build trust through transparency and responsiveness**

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and   
range of views and ideas expressed. Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.

**Encourage collaboration**

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to realise common and distinctive aspirations for increasing and improving fair and active participation.

* [Make your content engaging](#_Make_your_content)
* [Understand your audience](#_Understand_your_audience)
* [Use a storyboard to write proactive content](#_Use_a_storyboard)
* [Release open data](#_Release_open_data)
* [Draft your questions to invite feedback](#_Draft_your_questions)
* [Create consistent questions across platforms](#_Create_consistent_questions)
* [Standardise identifiers on all projects](#_Standardise_identifiers_on)
* [Consider what other useful data you may want to collect about your stakeholders](#_Consider_what_other)

### Make your content engaging

Your content must be engaging. It has to stand out, be alluring, interesting and entertaining. You need to consider and manage your stakeholder relations, be genuine and respectful. Communicate who you are, your intention and the ways people can communicate with you.

Producing content that is engaging will encourage your stakeholders follow you and keep coming back, or give you their details so they receive your updates.

When writing your content you must consider:

* your brand
* key messages and marketing materials
* using the right personality and tone for each channel
* sharing your content with social networks on social media
* your stakeholders and their user profiles
* the journey you want to take them on
* the relationships you want to create
* what types of information and data you want to collect
* the different way people consume information online as oppose to print.

For more guidance on writing for the web see the guidance on [writing accessible language](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/design-and-development/accessible-language/) and the [Govt.nz style guide](https://www.govt.nz/about/our-style-guide/), and this blog post on [getting government to use plain English.](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2014/11/getting-government-to-use-plain-english/)

There are three types of content when designing online engagement:

1. **Proactive content**– this is your story. Map it, plan and create content and a user journey around it.
2. **Responsive content** – responding to questions and issues, acknowledging input, creating content that is sharable through social media, demonstrating you are listening and know what content your audience likes.
3. **Reactive content** – a rapid response to an issue in real-time.

### Understand your audience

Listening to your community online will help you identify your audience, key stakeholders and how information is shared online and offline among social networks in your community. You need to consider the personality and tone of your communications by tailoring it to the business, audience and engagement method.

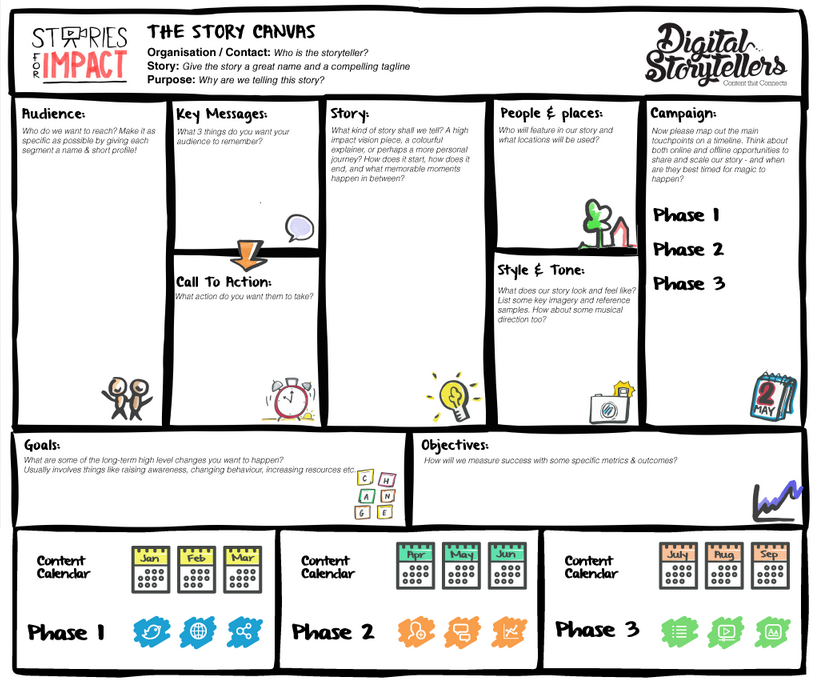
You also need to think about what channels your stakeholders are already using as you need to engage with them in the way and using the tools that are most convenient to them.

### Use a storyboard to write proactive content

You can use a story canvas to create your story and plan proactive communications. The image on this page is a 'Story Canvas' provided by Digital Storytellers. We recommend using this canvas to create your story then map it to a timeline to create your content calendar.

Your content plan should include content that is on theme and appropriate for you to use and share. Think about your stakeholders, and be proactive in creating content in forms they like. Use rich media, images and video. Proactive communications should be planned with your storyboard and content approved well before it is scheduled to go live or be posted.

How are you going to make your content stand out? Pepper your storyboard with content that complements and enhances your story.



### Release open data

Releasing open data using the [New Zealand Data and Information Management Principles](https://www.ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/open-government/new-zealand-data-and-information-management-principles/) can significantly enhance the effectiveness of engagement. Open data can be used to inform participants, especially when using thicker forms of engagement. Consider what data you could release for your engagement that could raise awareness and increase stakeholder understanding. It can also be used as an opportunity to test and get feedback on the data you have released and its suitability as an evidence base for your proposals.

Releasing the results of your engagement can also inform future engagements and empower communities to self-organise.

### Draft your questions to invite feedback

This is the most critical and underestimated part of engaging online.

When inviting feedback you might ask for input on:

* sections of a document
* a set of standard questions
* open questions about the topic or key themes.

To shape your questions to invite feedback, work backwards from:

* What do you need to know from these stakeholders to help make this decision?
* What do you need to include in reports to make them useful and what format do they need to be in?
* How will you compare and relate metrics in your analysis such as area, stakeholder type and issue?
* What aspects of the project can be influenced?
* What is non-negotiable and what is open for discussion / negotiation?
* Will you engage the same stakeholders again at a different stage in your process? Will the questions be the same?

We recommend you use the guidance on [questionnaire design](#_Case_Study:_Wellington) to help you shape questions and develop online surveys.

### Create consistent questions across platforms

There is value in consistent questions across platforms.

It is worth considering whether questions asked and the data collected can be the same across all touch points. This will make collation and analysis of input, particularly qualitative feedback much easier and enable real time reporting. Real time reporting helps you build responsive content, improves the efficiency of your Issue and Risk Management Procedure (IRMP) and supports the proactive identification and management of potential project impacts.

### Standardise identifiers on all projects

If your organisation would like to coordinate engagement beyond consultation and across project teams, it is worth working out how to standardise the collection of personal data.

This will make it easier to measure:

* the reach of engagement
* how representative your processes are
* issues and community sentiment across projects.

### Consider what other useful data you may want to collect about your stakeholders

Your type of engagement, objectives and metrics for success may indicate you also collect:

* personal data (see note below):
  + identifiers to measure representativeness - name, organisation, position
  + contact details – for future communications.
* geographical data: a post code could suffice, to understand the site and scale of issues
* demographic data: nationality, age, gender, language spoken at home - to measure representativeness and refine communications
* stakeholders interests: so they can be proactively engaged in future
* consent to use, store and share information.

NOTE: If you are planning on collecting personal information you need to consider the guidance on [privacy and personal information](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/security-and-privacy-management/foundations/privacy-and-personal-information/) including how you will comply with the [Privacy Commissioners Information Privacy Principles](http://www.privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act-and-codes/privacy-principles/) and the Privacy Act 1993.

Also see the broader guidance on [security and privacy management](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/security-and-privacy-management/foundations/privacy-and-personal-information/).

## Managing, responding to and sharing information and feedback

Engagement is an activity that generates information as well as relationships.   
Before you engage ensure you are prepared to manage the information you will gather.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Build trust through transparency and responsiveness**

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed. Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.

**Encourage collaboration**

Support and encourage people, the public sector, community groups and others to work together to improve government.

**Encourage openness   
and learning**

Create a safe environment to explore new ideas, learn and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively and make sure engagement is effective and relevant.

To manage, respond to and share information and feedback you will need to:

* [Consider how you will comply with information management requirements](#_Consider_how_you_2)
* [Consider data collation and reporting before inviting input](#_Consider_data_collation)
* [Define your moderating and response process](#_Define_your_moderating)
* [Demonstrate you’re listening by sharing information](#_Demonstrate_you’re_listening)

### Consider how you will comply with information management requirements

For information you have either created or gathered you will need to:

* comply with the Public Records Act 2005, and the Official Information Act 1982
* consider the guidance on [information and data management](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/information-and-data-management/).

For any personal information you have gathered you will need to:

* consider the guidance on [privacy and personal information](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/security-and-privacy-management/foundations/privacy-and-personal-information/)
* comply with the [Privacy Commissioners Information Privacy Principles](http://www.privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act-and-codes/privacy-principles/)
* comply with the Privacy Act 1993.

The volume of information you collect will depend on how open your engagement is, how far you broadcast the opportunity to participate, how open your questions are, and if you are treating input as formal, informal or social.

It is important to communicate publicly how the feedback received will be treated. You must clearly state in your [engagement policy](#_Develop_your_engagement_2) how will you collect, collate and analyse the information and how will it be reported publicly and internally. This is especially important for formal consultation processes required under legislation.

### Consider data collation and reporting before inviting input

Before designing methods to engage online consider:

* How you will collate data across systems for analysis and reporting.
  + Can you get your tools to talk to each other or integrate?
  + Can you export or import data from one tool to another?
  + How will you manage data collected offline and compare it to data collected online?
* The types of reports you will need.
  + Do you need to know issues per area, issues across stakeholder groups, issues at a certain time or phase of engagement?
* Whether you need to store, use and share the data for issues and relationship management or future engagement.
  + This may include sharing data with other agencies responsible for issues outside your scope.
  + Your information management team will be able to advise about data storage, use and sharing.
* How to ensure consent is collected with data to meet all your future user scenarios.
  + Most agencies have a privacy officer who can help you with this.
* How data can be managed to ensure you meet information, records and privacy requirements.
  + This should be outlined in your protocols.

### Define your moderating and response process

If you’re using a discussion forum, a moderation policy and agreed protocols for management are essential to ensure your approach is applied consistently and risks are managed. This moderation and response process should also be included in your engagement policy.

You will also need to nominate someone to get alerts and may choose to hire an Online Community Manager to champion discussion regularly add fresh content and encourage participants to engage. This role would also be responsible for the publishing of comments, keeping stakeholders engaged and the management of the issues and risk process.

A supplementary document has been added to this guide to help you plan for the management of [discussion forums](#_Online_Discussion_Forums). This tool will help you understand and plan your moderation and risk management approach and build the right team of resources to manage your discussion forums.

### Be responsive, demonstrate you’re listening

Demonstrating you’re listening makes two-way engagement through online surveys and submission forms a much more responsive and open process. It also demonstrates transparency of your process which builds trust and makes your processes much more engaging.

Be prepared to share information, listen and respond to information and stories shared by your stakeholders. Listen to what they talk about online, how they talk about your topic, language used, who they trust and content they like. Consider how your story fits and shape it accordingly to illustrate your story. Sharing others' content can also help build relationships online and offline.

Have a plan for how you will develop responsive and reactive content. Provide your Online Community Manager with key messages and a style guide so the tone of content developed is consistent. You will also need a procedure for how issues will be tracked, risk determined and how responsive and reactive content will be approved. Include this in your Issues and risk management profile (IRMP).

#### Publish comments

In two-way engagement it is quite common for submissions to be published publicly during or after consultation. Consent is requested to do this with specific questions asked about the publishing of personal data.

Three-way engagement requires the publishing of comments for everyone to see, like and comment on. You might publish pins on a map, comments on a discussion forum and ideas shared.

Some argue that if published feedback can influence the views of the participants that follow. It is also argued that seeing others' viewpoints published can help put the issue and stakeholders own interests into context and encourage active citizenship.

When publishing comments a decision needs to be made about whether you will:

* let people publish comments; and moderate after they are submitted (post-moderation)
* moderate comments before they’re published (pre-moderation).

This should be accounted for in your issues and risk management profile.

See the guidance on [discussion forum moderation](#_Moderating).

#### Publish feedback and final reports

Progressive feedback reporting is a great way to provide responsive content and an excellent way to keep participants engaged. As explained in the [Case Study: Wellington City Council Draft Long Term Plan](#_Case_Study:_Wellington_1), some local governments have used live public dashboards to count down the last days and hours of engagement and display quantitative feedback gathered in real time. This is a great way to close the loop if your approach to engagement changes across the phases of your project.

Publishing the final reports of consultation, or closing the loop, is standard practice. Demonstrate how you’re listening by also publishing summaries of feedback and how it was treated during the decision-making process. This shows respect to stakeholders who have invested their time and attention to engagement. In some cases these engagement outputs also include a summary of themes and how key issues raised have or will be addressed in the next phase of the project development.

# Selecting the right tools for online engagement

In this section:

* [Consider what you want the tools to do](#_Consider_what_you)
* [Gather requirements](#_Gather_requirements)
* [Find and select the right tools](#_Find_and_select)

## Consider what you need the tools to do

To be successful at online engagement your [engagement strategy](#_Developing_your_engagement_1) must be developed **before** you select tools for engagement. Your strategy, including your mandate, purpose and approach will ensure you select the right tools and configure them to fit your objectives and the needs of your stakeholders.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Build trust through transparency and responsiveness**

Be clear and open about   
the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed. Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust   
and confidence in Government’s ability to   
deliver to people’s needs.

Take your time to pick the right product. Define your purpose clearly and gather requirements. When you do select a tool make sure you have some support to get skilled in its use, and know where to go for help if something goes wrong.

When engaging online there are two types of tools that will help you:

* tool for online engagement
* tool for issues and relationship management.

Managing this information well will give you insights past the timeframe of your current project.

In an ideal world, your tools synchronise so you can share information across them and don't need to duplicate efforts when using them. Considering this when selecting and configuring tools will improve your user experience.

It will be useful to find a tool that can:

* help you track quantitative data
* enable qualitative issues analysis
* enable the entry or collation of data collected offline
* help reference issues with stakeholders, and stakeholder types for relationship management.

You could also consider taking mobile devices to events so you can collect data offline into your online tool. This will help with information management and reduce the need to manually enter data after the event.

We recommend you speak to your software providers and your agency’s IT and Information Management teams about interoperability, IT architecture, security and information management procedures.

Before looking for tools it’s important to confirm your requirements. To help you do this we’ve created a requirements checklist.

## Gather requirements

Here is a process that should help you gather requirements:

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Plan and prepare carefully**

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that engagement serves both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

1. Decide what you need:
   1. Define the purpose and objectives for your engagement. The [EngageTech spectrum](http://engage2.com.au/engagetech-spectrum/) should help.
   2. You may need to use different tools for different phases of your process. See the section on [designing your online engagement approach](#_Prepare_to_manage)
   3. Consider how you will engage online, but also how you will collate data for analysis and reporting. See the section on [engaging your stakeholders online](#_Engaging_your_stakeholders)
   4. Is this a long-term or a short-term investment? Do you need to manage relationships and issues beyond the consultation or initial engagement?
   5. If you are planning to establish a new web presence do you need to [apply for a new Domain Name](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/domain-names/), e.g. consultation.govt.nz? It is best to do this at the earliest possible time **before** deciding on a particular brand for your engagement.
2. Find out what your stakeholders need:
   1. Talk to a small sample of your stakeholders. How do they want to engage with you? What approaches would encourage them to participate? What are their barriers to participation?
   2. Are they more likely to use mobile devices when engaging with your project? See these blog posts on [writing for responsive design](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2013/09/writing-for-responsive-design/) and [responsive web design: a case study](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2012/09/responsive-web-design-a-case-study/).
3. Find out what you have already:
   1. Have you checked with the Department of Internal Affairs[online@dia.govt.nz](mailto:online@dia.govt.nz?subject=Online%20engagement%20tools)to see whether there is a whole of Government tool available to meet your needs like the online engagement pilots that have been run on [Govt.nz](https://www.govt.nz)?
   2. Does your organisation already have tools to engage online? What online engagement methods can it provide?
   3. Do you have a method of collecting submissions online?
   4. How does your organisation track and manage issues and relationships? Is there a system for that?
   5. If you don’t have these things, maybe you need them. Would anyone else in your organisation be willing to champion their procurement?
4. Determine a budget:
   1. How much budget do you have for your project? See the section on [determining your project budget](#_Determine_your_budget)
   2. What options are there to reuse what other agencies have already invested in? Ask a question in the [NZ Online Engagement Community](https://engageonline.webtoolkit.govt.nz/cp/) or contact Department of Internal Affairs[online@dia.govt.nz](mailto:online@dia.govt.nz?subject=Online%20engagement%20tools)
5. Think about the user experience – yours and your stakeholders:
   1. This comes back to your strategy:How will you get them engaged? How will you keep them engaged?
   2. How will you integrate online and offline engagement?
   3. Is this a two- or three-way engagement? How will you publish and moderate input?
   4. Do you need to collect specific data?
   5. Do you want to use this tool to manage communications and events?
   6. What is your issues and risk management procedure?
   7. How will you analyse and report feedback publicly and internally?
6. Consider which standards, policies, mandates and legislation you need to comply with:
   1. Your agency’s social media, engagement, communication, procurement, information management, security and IT policies.
   2. The [Government Web Accessibility and Usability Standards](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/about-the-standards/) must be implemented by all [Public Service departments and Non-Public Service departments in the State Services](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/state_sector_organisations) as directed by a 2003 Cabinet mandate.
   3. The [Requirements for Cloud Computing](https://www.ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/information-management/requirements-for-cloud-computing) if you are using a cloud based software-as-a-service.
   4. Cabinet mandated [Common ICT Capabilities](https://www.ict.govt.nz/services/available-now/) like Infrastructure-as-a-Service and the RealMe Login Service.
   5. Public Records Act 1993, Privacy Act 2005, Official Information Act 1982.

## Find and select the right tools

Now that you have [determined your requirements](#_Gather_requirements) based on your [engagement strategy](#_Developing_your_engagement_1) you can look for tools that fit your engagement objectives and approach and your stakeholder needs.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Make engagement   
standard practice**

Promote a culture of engagement as standard practice across the public sector in support of ongoing public participation.

**Plan and prepare carefully**

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that engagement serves both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

Before investing in new online tools or services:

* See if there are options to reuse what other agencies have already invested in. Ask a question in the [NZ Online Engagement Community](https://engageonline.webtoolkit.govt.nz/cp/) or contact the Department of Internal Affairs[online@dia.govt.nz](mailto:online@dia.govt.nz?subject=Online%20engagement%20tools).
* Consider using common or shared capabilities, like the [Common Web Platform](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2015/03/better-code-sharing-on-cwp/), and the [Common Web Services Panel](https://www.ict.govt.nz/services/show/CWSP).
* Carefully consider if you really need a new website for your engagement. The [Government web domain consists of over 500 websites](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2014/12/the-size-and-shape-of-government-web/), which makes it hard for people to find the information they are looking for. Each website should be managed according to [online management good practice](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-management-good-practice/) and the digital lifecycle [link to come when digital lifecycle guidance published].
* If you need a domain name specifically for your engagement project then [apply for a Domain Name](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/domain-names/) **before** deciding on a particular brand for your engagement.

[ParticipatedDB](http://www.participatedb.com/) is the best database of tools for engagement available on the international market in 2015. It lists products that are both Open Source and proprietary (Software-as-a-Service). If you decide to use SaaS be sure to follow your agencies procurement policy and complete a [cloud risk assessment](https://www.ict.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/information-management/requirements-for-cloud-computing).

Always ask for a reference when talking to a product provider.

# Configuring and launching your online engagement

In this section:

* [Configure your tools](#_Configure_your_online)
* [Try a test run](#_Try_a_test)
* [Consider a soft launch](#_Consider_a_soft)

## Configure your online engagement tools

After you have selected your tools you will need to set them up, add your content and get ready for launch. Consider the digital lifecycle guidance [link to come when digital lifecycle guidance published].

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Build trust through transparency and responsiveness**

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and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.

**Encourage openness   
and learning**

Create a safe environment to explore new ideas, learn and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively and make sure engagement is effective and relevant.

**Set clear expectations**

Set expectations about the purpose of the engagement and how much influence people will have over the outcomes.

Here is a checklist of things to consider when setting up your tools for online engagement:

1. Branding:
   * Does the project need its own brand?
   * How does this brand align with and reflect the corporate brand?
   * Consider the [All-of-Government Brand Policy and Guidelines](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/govt-brand).
   * If you need a domain name specifically for your engagement project then [apply for a Domain Name](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/domain-names/) **before** deciding on a particular brand for your engagement.
   * How will the platform, project website integrate or fit within with your corporate website? Does it need to? What are the implications for your users?
2. Designing for users:
   * Make the interface engaging and usable.
   * Use responsive design so people can engage with you equally no matter what device they use. See these blog posts on [writing for responsive design](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2013/09/writing-for-responsive-design/) and [responsive web design: a case study](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2012/09/responsive-web-design-a-case-study/).
   * Make sure you have considered the [service design guidelines](http://dev.webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/get-the-technology-right/guidance/service-design/approach/)
   * Consider your users experience – see the section on [identifying your stakeholders and their needs](#_Identifying_your_stakeholders)
   * Consider project [policies and procedures](#_Develop_your_engagement_2).
   * What is the user journey? How do you expect them to travel through the content/site? Have you made it easy for them to do what you need them to do?
   * Consider the type of engagement: Are you trying to encourage deliberation? Or seek feedback?
   * Consider how to overcome potential barriers to engagement.
   * User access – roles within the team
   * Hardware for events:
     + Do you need offline access / cache
     + Wifi – cellular
   * Accessibility: designing for inclusion
     + How will you integrate online and offline forms of engagement to ensure consistent engagement with people who have limited access to the internet?
     + Is your platform mobile accessible?
     + Have you covered all [Government Web Accessibility Standard](http://dev.webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/get-the-technology-right/standards/web-accessibility-standard-1-0/) and [Usability Standard](http://dev.webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/get-the-technology-right/about-the-standards/about-the-web-usability-standard/)?
   * Do you also need to configure a back end for moderation and data management?
3. Social media integration:
   * [Consider the social media guidance](http://dev.webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/get-the-technology-right/guidance/social-media/)
   * What social media account will you use and integrate with during this engagement?
   * Where will you place icons and share buttons – home page, pages, at content?
   * Make content sharable – configure tweets and posts with references to your brand so they can be tracked
   * Do you want to embed a twitter feed in your engagement? Should it show your tweets only, tweets to your account or be hashtagged?
4. Security and privacy:
   * How will you ensure privacy requirements are met? See the guidance on [privacy and personal information](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/security-and-privacy-management/foundations/privacy-and-personal-information/).
   * Define user access for members of the team – edit, view, publish, export of data, recipients of reports, customised dashboards
   * How will you test and launch engagement – do you need a development site or protected environment?
   * What is your go-live processes?
   * Have you had a legal review of your privacy statement? Is it in plain language?
   * Have you conducted a security review of the platform?
5. Integration of platforms:
   * How will you integrate the online engagement method into your site?
     + If you are using an iframe is it secure?
     + Will systems been networked or stacked? Do they need to be? Can they be?
     + Do the systems you’re using have API’s? Can you get one?
   * If you have to create outputs from systems to input into others:
     + What will the process be?
     + How will you ensure data is formatted for collation to reduce the effort for data analysis?
   * If you have references in your online engagement ensure all hyperlinks are live and open in a new tab
6. Analytics:
   * Set analytics to meet your criteria – pages, referrals etc (see [Govt.nz’s analytics dashboard](https://www.govt.nz/about/analytics/) as an example, or the [Wellington City Council engagement case study](#_Case_Study:_Wellington_1))
   * Ensure all metrics you want to measure are covered
   * Configure reports and establish reporting process
7. Content development:
   * See the [communicating for online engagement](#_Communicating_for_online) section for content development, and also see the guidance on [accessible language](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/design-and-development/accessible-language/) and information about [writing in plain English](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2014/11/getting-government-to-use-plain-english/).
   * Design for the platform
   * Create sharable content – see the guide to your web or social media platform for how to configure share buttons
8. Questionnaire tools
   * Consider the guidance on [questionnaire design](#_Case_Study:_Wellington)
   * What are your questions?
   * Have you embedded the right logic in survey – e.g. only display follow up questions when needed
   * What are the export functions
   * How will you configure outputs?
9. Question design
   * Determine your questions
   * Is it possible to have consistent questions across platforms?
   * Is your engagement deliberative – how do questions reflect content?
   * What other data do you need to gather
10. Event tools
    * Do you want people to register and RSVP for events online?
    * How will this system integrate with how you track communications, issues and relationships?
    * How will you collect feedback at events?
    * Do you want to ask questions of participants when they register for events?
    * Do you need hardware? Is it set up? Tested?
    * How will you send follow up emails to participants?
11. Submission tools
    * How will submissions be collected?
    * What personal data are you collecting and how will you ensure it is managed in accordance with your policy, the Privacy Act 1993, and the [Privacy Commissioners Information Privacy Principles](http://www.privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act-and-codes/privacy-principles/)? See the guidance on [privacy and personal information](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/security-and-privacy-management/foundations/privacy-and-personal-information/).
    * How will you acknowledge receipt of submissions?
    * Publishing process:
      + What is required for internal tracking of submissions?
      + Will you publish them?
      + Will you notify the stakeholder that their submission has been published?
      + How will you removed personal details if a stakeholder does not want them published – e.g. redaction?
12. Online discussion and idea sharing tools
    * See the section on [discussion forums](#_Online_engagement_checklist)
    * Plan your publishing processes
    * How will you acknowledge input?
    * What is your moderation and response policy and procedure?
    * What is your issues and risk management procedure?
13. Ways to acknowledge input:
    * Pop-up box on receipt
    * Automated email reply on receipt or publication
    * Live publishing
14. Issues, information management and analysis processes
    * How will you track and manage issues?
      + Can you get an overview of issues at any time? Across platforms? Do you need a dashboard?
      + Can you create geographic profiles – of stakeholders, issues?
      + Can you report issues across engagement activities / events?
    * Collating data and analysis:
      + Do systems have API feeds to collate data?
      + How will you be digitise submissions collected offline?
      + Can you set up consistent format for outputs for all systems collecting data?
      + What is your procedure to collate all outputs from all systems collecting data?
      + What is your criteria for analysis?
      + Will some input be weighed differently?
      + How will you apply your policy for formal, informal and social input?
    * Information management:
      + Consider the [Information and data management](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/information-and-data-management/) guidance.
      + Make sure you [meet requirements under the Public Records Act 2005](http://archives.govt.nz/advice/public-records-act-2005)
      + How will you ensure records and information management policy is met?
      + How will you link to records management system if required?
15. Reporting:
    * How will you report internally?
      + What types of reports are required? Consider criteria and format.
      + Will you set up automated reports? Consider your audience and criteria.
      + Do you or others need a live dashboard?
    * How will you report publicly?
      + Will you publish summaries of feedback live?
      + How will you report progressively?
      + What will your consultation report look like?
16. Communication and relationship management:
    * How will you manage and collate personal data/ stakeholder records? Consider the guidance on [privacy and personal information](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/security-and-privacy-management/foundations/privacy-and-personal-information/)
    * How will you track communication online and offline?
      + Can you enter records of contact?
      + Do systems collecting data feed into your relationship management system?
    * How will you track stakeholder relations?
      + Can you create user profiles? Can they self-manage?
      + Can you categorise stakeholder types or interests?
      + Can you create geographical profiles of stakeholders?

## Try a test run

We usually engage when an issue is hard or political, and even though many of us have been trialling technologies for engagement it's still a relatively new practice. So start small: try a test run and consider a ‘soft launch’.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Encourage openness   
and learning**

Create a safe environment to explore new ideas, learn and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively and make sure engagement is effective and relevant.

**Plan and prepare carefully**

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that engagement serves both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

**Encourage collaboration**

Support and encourage people, the public sector, community groups and others to work together to improve government.

Test runs are great at building the confidence and trust of your Project Team and internal stakeholders. Give them access to your development or test environment to participate for an hour or so. You could also include a small sample of external stakeholders to ensure it meets their needs too. This can also help your team test out their procedures. During or after your test run ask stakeholders who participated to provide you with feedback about their experience and do your best to incorporate changes where needed.

## Consider a soft launch

Before launching your online engagement publicly it can also be useful to invite trusted stakeholders to participate ahead of the general public. This is an excellent way to demonstrate that you value their opinion. Your stakeholders will feel honoured by the opportunity to see information first and provide you with feedback. If you are publishing comments this will also help populate and stimulate discussion making the site more engaging for the stakeholders who follow.

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Plan and prepare carefully**

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that engagement serves both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

**Encourage collaboration**

Support and encourage people, the public sector, community groups and others to work together to improve government.

If you don't feel comfortable inviting stakeholders to participate in your soft launch, consider inviting some peers. The [NZ Online Community of Practice](https://engageonline.webtoolkit.govt.nz/cp/) is a good place to find others practising engagement who might be willing to help.

**Don’t forget to add your engagement project to the** [**Govt.nz consultation listing**](http://www.govt.nz/consultations)!

# Closing your online engagement

To close your online engagement you will need to:

**Demonstrating the principles of engagement**

**Build trust through transparency and responsiveness**

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organisers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed. Meaningful and responsive engagement builds trust   
and confidence in Government’s ability to deliver to people’s needs.

**Encourage openness   
and learning**

Create a safe environment to explore new ideas, learn and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively and make sure engagement is effective and relevant.

* Analyse and report feedback
* Manage the information generated
* Evaluate your engagement project

## Analyse and report feedback

When analysing feedback consider the social, technical, economic and political (STEP) context that it was provided in. This will help you to identify external factors which may have influenced the feedback, and it will help determine the significance of the overall result.

Make sure results are reported in an accurate and unbiased manner. Present quantitative results with a clear indication of the reliability of the data. Avoid mistaking correlation of data for causality when there is not enough evidence to draw that conclusion.

Publishing the final reports of consultation, or closing the loop, is standard practice. Demonstrate how you’re listening by also publishing summaries of feedback and how it was treated during the decision-making process. This shows respect to stakeholders who have invested their time and attention to engagement. In some cases these engagement outputs also include a summary of themes and how key issues raised have or will be addressed in the next phase of the project development.

Releasing the results of your engagement as open data can also inform future engagements and empower communities to self-organise.

What enduring published record will you provide for this engagement? Even summary information – about the project, who engaged and how, what they said and how you responded – is potentially useful for your organisation, and others when researching for their next engagement with similar stakeholders on related topics.

Or write up you engagement as a case study like [Wellington City Council](http://dev.webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/case-study-wellington-city-council-draft-long-term-plan) did, and share it on this website.

## Manage the information generated

Your engagement project would have generated a lot of information, which all needs to be well managed in accordance with the Public Records Act 2005, the Official Information Act 1982, and potentially the Privacy Act 1993.

See the guidance on [complying with information management requirements](http://dev.webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/engaging-stakeholders-online/managing-responding-to-and-sharing-feedback/#consider-how-you-will-comply-with-information-management-requirements), and for your online information see the guidance on [removing or archiving content](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/information-and-data-management/removing-or-archiving-content/).

## Evaluate your engagement project

Evaluation is an important but often forgotten aspect of engagement. By evaluating how well you met your [metrics of success](http://dev.webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/online-engagement/planning-your-online-engagement/develop-your-engagement-strategy/#define-your-metrics-of-success) you can learn valuable lessons for future online engagements.

Questions to consider when evaluating your engagement project:

* Did you achieve the degree of participation you expected?
* Did you reach the right stakeholders at the right time?
* Which channels were the most successful at encouraging participation for which stakeholders?

# Online discussion forums

Discussion forums provide an online space for stakeholders to discuss plans, give information, allow stakeholders to discuss ideas and opinions with each other and ensure stakeholders feel listened to. They work best when the organisation's staff can respond quickly to enquiries/requests for information and correct 'factual errors'. They are an opportunity for multi-direction conversations.

In this section:

* Benefits of online discussion forums
* What to consider when using online discussion forums
* Risk management for online discussion forums

## Benefits of online discussion forums

Discussion forums:

* allow for multilogue (many to many discussion)
* can allow for ideation: the formation of ideas or concepts by a group of people.
* allow for ownership and creation of solutions.

Discussion forums work best:

* with existing communities who already have a relationship with the discussion forum owner and with each other.
* in conjunction with opinion polls and questionnaires.
* great as an online continuation of workshops and other face to face tools

## What to consider when using online discussion forums

* Resourcing – it won't look after itself
* Capture and reporting the participants' responses
* User login.

Setting up a discussion forum is fairly straight forward and there are a number of commercial organisations who will do it for you.

The following are some of the key things you will need to consider when using online discussion forums.

### The information you provide

This needs to be complete and layered so that participants are able to take part in an informed discussion. Who will provide the information in plain language and any supporting video, maps, pictures?

### Expert response providers

Who will you need to call on for expert advice and response to queries from participants? What kind of turn-around times are they willing to commit to? (hint 10 working days will not cut it).

### Should you require your users to login?

Mandatory creation of a user account with user name and password and associated email address means that at least contact can be made with anyone misusing the discussion forum. It also makes it possible to feedback to discussion forum users with a summary of comments and eventual results which is the ideal for good engagement practice.

However, requiring users to login can be a barrier to participation. You will need to weigh up the pros and cons of requiring user registration.

At this point you may wish to consider what identifiers you want, for example do you want to limit use to Authenticated Users only. The downside of making user accounts mandatory is that the more you insist on users identifying themselves, the more likely that users may be suspicious about how their information will be used, particularly if the topic is contentious. On the other hand you may want to limit comments on a contentious topic to those who are prepared to be identified – as that does tend to contain the more bizarre comment. On the other hand you may wish to make sure you get comment from as wide a range of people as possible in which case the fewer barriers or steps in the process the more likely you are to allow 'anyone' to comment on the forum.

### Capture and reporting the participants' views

Considering how the information collected will be recorded and reported, and how that information will be used to influence the final decision, is vital at the start. Ease of use of the 'backend' of any system needs to be thought about and planned for. Many commercial organisations will allow the client to download input as a CSV file in Excel which makes it simple to collate and analyse in Excel or import into another programme.

### Moderating

The resource needed will depend partly on the mode of moderation you choose and partly on the volume of comment. If participant input is to be encouraged then responsive moderating is key.

Moderation is necessary to:

* make sure the debate remains focused and on track
* remove or stop publication of salacious, insulting, personal or profane comments
* respond to technical or factual queries.

***Pre-moderation*** means that all comments are approved by the forum owner before the posts are able to be viewed in the forum.  
***Post moderation*** means that the participants post directly into the forum with no delays, but the forum owner reserves the right to take a post down under certain conditions.  
There are advantages and disadvantages to pre and post moderation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pre-moderation advantages and disadvantages | |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| Only posts in accordance with the moderation policy will be published | Delay in posts appearing (may annoy participants and they will stop participating) Constant moderation required to avoid delays – therefore more resource intensive |
| Queries can be responded to at the same time as they are made public Corrections to factual inaccuracy can be made at the same time as the posts appear on the forum | Delays in post appearing can restrict free flow of ideas and conversation Appearance of control does not enhance trust |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Post-moderation advantages and disadvantages | |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| Clear commitment to encourage robust debate from forum owner Less frequent moderation necessary and hence less resource needed | Risk of spam, trolling and unsuitable comments appearing. |
| More free flowing discussion as response to each other can be immediate (almost like a webinar) and more productive. | Forum owner can watch the development of the discussion and multi directional exchange of ideas and opinions. |

Moderators can be resourced these from within your agency or you can choose to purchase moderating services from a number of discussion forum suppliers. It is worth considering that the majority of traffic on public discussion forums generally takes place from 8pm until 1am on weekdays and often on Sundays.

When thinking about how you will moderate your online forum consider how you will acknowledge people’s input. See the section on [being responsive, demonstrate you’re listening](#_Be_responsive,_demonstrate).

## Risk Management

There are a number of risks commonly associated with the use of online communications. The table below details the most common recognised risks and makes some suggestions for managing these. The [Office of the Auditor Generals' report on social media use by public entities](http://www.oag.govt.nz/2013/social-media) has some very useful commentary and case studies that may be useful in this context.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Risk | Description | Suggested mitigation | Mishap recovery |
| Spamming or spam (Not canned meat) | Here's the definition from Wikipedia: **Spam** is most often considered to be electronic junk mail or junk newsgroup postings. Some people **define spam** even more generally as any unsolicited email. It can also be one person or group posting the same or similar messages again and again with the intention of taking over the forum, drowning out the other voices. | Make sure this is covered in the terms and conditions. Keep up moderating late at night and in early hours of morning when spammers most often hit. | Block the sender from posting and explain why and what has been done to both the original user and the community. |
| Trolling or troll (not a cast member of Lord of the Rings) | A troll is a person who sows discord on the Internet by starting arguments or upsetting people by posting inflammatory, [extraneous](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/extraneous#Adjective), or [off-topic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Off-topic) messages in an online community. Usually with the deliberate intent of provoking readers into an [emotional](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emotion) response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion. Media attention in recent years has equated trolling with [online harassment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_harassment) | Make sure this is covered in the Terms and Conditions. Remove troll posts quickly, give the participant the opportunity to repost more appropriately and warn the poster of your policy (three strikes is a common standard) | Follow this link to see the [social media guidance on the Web Toolkit.](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/social-media/how-to-handle-a-mishap/) |

### Example conditions of use statement

[Organisation's name] reserves the right to remove contributions and followers on its discussion forum (social media pages) that break the rules stated below. Messages and images on this discussion forum must always be polite, appropriate and relevant.

Users of this discussion forum must never:

* swear
* post messages or images that are unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive
* post photos or videos of people without their prior consent
* post protected content copied from elsewhere
* post the same message, or very similar messages, more than once ('spamming')
* publicise personal information or contact details
* advertise products or services
* impersonate someone else

# Questionnaires

Parts of the following are adapted from Methodological standard for Screen Design of Internet Questionnaires and Methodological standard for Writing and Constructing a Questionnaire with thanks to Statistics New Zealand.

Questionnaires (or surveys) are probably the most commonly used tool in our engagement processes. This section has been developed to assist practitioners design and produce effective questionnaires.

In this section:

* Introduction
* Planning questionnaires
* Objective of the questionnaire
* Developing a questionnaire
* Questionnaire type and design
* Question display
* Response formats
* Online questionnaire functions
* Glossary of terms
* Final checklist for online questionnaires

## Introduction

Online engagement lends itself very well to use of questionnaires – they can be a straightforward tool for the participant to respond to your engagement and most participants how to respond to a questionnaire. More good news is that online capture of participants' feedback can be more cost effective in the reporting stage.

Before exploring questionnaires however we might consider why. A reasonable question for you to ask: Is a questionnaire really going to engage our stakeholders?

If the answer is ***maybe*** then going back to the [engagement methods](#_Determine_how_much) section of this guidance and looking at the appropriate level of engagement and matching tools might be useful before going any further. But if a questionnaire is the way to go– then let's get started.

It's vital to design for online use – just transferring your paper-based questionnaire to a PDF or an online form doesn't always work because people interact differently with a screen than with paper.

And it's important to consider are we asking the right questions. For example, those that:

* enable people to express their opinions, concerns and expectations
* capture information to help decision makers make informed decisions.

Be wary of leading questions. People may not want to respond to a questionnaire that seems to force them down a path they don't want to follow.

Something that's worth remembering: there are differences in questionnaires developed for research purposes and those developed for consultation purposes. One basic difference is that people who are affected by a proposal or a project will want room to provide their opinion and may not wish to answer all your questions.

## Planning questionnaires

**What is a questionnaire?** Also called a survey, a questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. In the context of engagement, a questionnaire can be a useful tool to guide participants into commenting on areas which can be influenced.

**When do we use a questionnaire?** Most likely use of questionnaires is when we want to gather feedback from a large number of people who have a fairly high interest and medium influence. Note: It would be useful here to refer back to the stakeholder analysis in your engagement plan.

If stakeholder interest is likely to be high then a questionnaire is a sensible way of capturing information. A questionnaire is also a good way of capturing feedback on options that have already been identified. Questionnaires are often used in the final stages of an engagement process when options have been developed in collaboration with stakeholder groups and now need to be tested.

### Objective of the questionnaire

When planning the questionnaire, the objectives of your engagement are a good starting point:

* What will the results of the engagement influence?
* What do you want to find out?

Specifying exactly what information is to be collected is key to devising a successful questionnaire. Think about the potential participants: questions may need to deal with the concerns of those directly affected by the issue as well as those indirectly affected. For example: a proposal to limit the number and size of snapper fish caught on any one outing by recreational fishers may seem to affect only those who go recreational fishing. But there will be wider stakeholder groups with an interest such as service providers dependent on these fisherman for their livelihood.

**Some examples of questionnaires** used for public consultation are:

* [Questionpro: Sample Survey Questionnaire](http://www.questionpro.com/survey-templates/sample-survey-questionnaire/)
* [Survey Gizmo: Survey Examples](http://www.surveygizmo.com/survey-examples/)
* [Snap Surveys: Sample Surveys](http://www.snapsurveys.com/survey-software/sample-surveys/)

There have also been a few online submission forms hosted on [Govt.nz](http://www.govt.nz) for public consultations.

## Developing a questionnaire

In this section:

* [Basic rules for a questionnaire](#_Basic_rules_for)
* [Question sequence](#_Question_sequence)
* [Question construction](#_Question_construction)

### Basic rules for questionnaire construction

* Use questions that are interpreted in the same way by members of different stakeholder groups.
* Use questions that allow for an entire range of options to be commented on.
* Don't force participants to choose between options where they may not agree with any of them.
* Have an ‘open’ answer category after any list of options.
* Use positive statements and avoid negatives or double negatives.
* Do not make assumptions about the participants.
* Use clear and comprehensible wording, easily understandable for all educational levels.
* Use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation.
* Avoid questions that contain more than one question (eg Do you think one-level and two-level buildings are suitable for this site?).
* Questions should not lead the participant towards any particular response.

### Question sequence

In general, questions should flow logically from one to the next. So the questionnaire should be developed to lead the participant through the topic in a logical manner. Wherever possible, a questionnaire should follow a natural flow, reflecting a train of thought, a logical conversation or a chain of events.

Also having relevant information immediately before or beside each question means that the participant has an opportunity to read factual items before expressing their point of view. Online presentation of information also offers the opportunity to provide layered information so the participant can continue to explore the information appropriate to their level of interest.  
People tend to look at the first few questions before deciding whether to respond to the questionnaire. By putting the questions of high interest first along with the most important issues, even partially completed questionnaires will contain useful responses.

A typical questionnaire flow might be:

* information about this questionnaire and how the responses will be used
* warm-up questions
* transition information
* skip instructions or routing
* complex or contentious areas.

**Warm-up** questions are usually simple to answer, help capture interest in the survey, and may help develop trust and confidence that the participant's views will be taken seriously. Good examples are questions which start with a good précis of the proposals and then ask: "Do you generally agree[] or disagree[] with these proposals. Please give us your main reasons for your choice above". This should be followed by an open text box so they can state their main reasons.

**Transition** information is used to separate the topic if there are several topics covered and to explain how they are related (or not).

**Skip** instructions direct the participant to the next relevant question – for example "If yes, then answer question 3. If no, then continue to question 4."

Most online questionnaires will use the response to a question to automatically route the participant to the next question to be answered. If authoring a questionnaire in an online tool, make sure you use this feature.

**Complex** and contentious topics are usually towards the end because the respondent is in ‘response mode’ and may have picked up more information and be willing to expand on their views.

Do use a progress bar in authoring the questionnaire. The progress bars lets the respondent know where they are in the questionnaire, so they are often more willing to give thoughtful and comprehensive responses.

Demographic questions should be at the end if used at all and should not be compulsory. It's useful to explain why we are collecting that kind of information. (That is normally to make sure we are reaching a wide range of members of the community and getting the views of a wide range of people). These kind of questions can give the impression that we are collecting very personal information and can make participants uncomfortable and concerned about how their views are going to be taken into consideration.

### Question construction

There are two main types of questions:

1. **open** – where space is given for the respondents to answer in their own way
2. **closed** – where questions are followed by structured responses (for example, simple YES or NO tick boxes or multiple choice answers).

Open questions reveal more information than closed, but can take more time and be more difficult to interpret. Both open and closed questions can be used in conjunction with each other to provide additional information and help the interpretation of responses.

The [Market Research Society](https://www.mrs.org.uk/) in the UK has identified four major issues that are known to have a negative impact on the quality of responses and participants' attitudes

1. very long questions
2. questions that ask the same thing but in a different way
3. insufficient opportunity for respondents to comment
4. excessive personal information requests.

The order of questions will have an effect on the answers that are given.Space should be provided to allow respondents to enter their comments on any other issues not covered by the questionnaire. This encourages respondents to feel that their views are valued and it provides a useful guide to aspects of the topic that may not have been adequately covered in the questionnaire.

#### ****Communication practicalities****

How are you going to attract participants to complete your online questionnaire? Pulling participants through to your questionnaire will be covered in your communications plan. At this stage you might want to consider if you need printed paper versions for some people.

Participants will need complete and clear information to be able to comment effectively. The better informed people are, the more useful their comment will be.

#### ****Testing and piloting****

Test and test again to make sure the questions make sense. It's worth testing the questionnaire with a few stakeholders before making it public. Stakeholders are useful because they will give you real feedback about whether your questionnaire will get the result you need.

## Questionnaire type and design

In this section:

* Choosing the questionnaire layout
* Responsive design
* Scrolling design
* Welcome and closing pages
* Page layout
* Navigation buttons

### Choosing the questionnaire layout

There are three types of Internet questionnaire layouts: scrolling; page-by-page or question-by-question; and hybrid scroll designs. See the glossary for information on each design.

* Choose either a page-by-page or scrolling design based on the length and complexity of routing within the questionnaire.
* Use a scrolling design for short questionnaires which do not have complex routing.
* Use a page-by-page design for long questionnaires which need complex routing (for example, routing based on answers to two or more previous questions).
* Avoid a mixed page-by-page and scroll (hybrid scroll) design unless there is a critical need for this type of design.

### Responsive design

A webpage that can be equally viewed and used on any device: PC, mobile phone, or tablet, without the user needing to scroll horizontally has been responsively designed. See these blog posts on [writing for responsive design](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2013/09/writing-for-responsive-design/) and [responsive web design: a case study](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/blog/2012/09/responsive-web-design-a-case-study/).

### Welcome and closing pages

Only include essential information on the welcome and closing pages. This includes information respondents need to know on beginning and completing the questionnaire:

* The welcome page should include the title of the survey, a brief description of its purpose and instructions on how to answer the questionnaire including contact details for help or information.
* The welcome page should also include the appropriate privacy statements. Different privacy conditions will apply for personal responses and for responses on behalf of an organisation, business or agency, so the appropriate information needs to be included.

#### How this information will be used:

* Appropriate statement of exactly how and where this information will be used and what influence it will have on the eventual outcome if possible.
* The welcome page should also be the place for respondents to login if necessary.
* The closing page should briefly note that respondents have finished and thank the respondents for answering the questionnaire. If possible, include a link on the closing page to next steps or for subsequent information.

### Page layout

Arrange the page with consistent layout. Ensure compliance with [the Government Web Accessibility and Usability Standards](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/about-the-standards/about-the-web-usability-standard/).

* The banner pane, content pane, and navigation buttons should be placed in the same location on each page.
* The banner pane should be at the top of the screen. These panes should include the questionnaire title and progress bar.
* The content pane containing questions, instructions and response options (or information in the welcome and closing pages) should be in the centre of the screen.

### Navigation buttons

Navigation buttons should be displayed horizontally at the bottom of the screen where they are not visually dominant.

* Include a 'back' button so respondents can review and change answers if necessary.
* Place the 'back' button on the left. The 'next' button should be placed on the right.

## Question display

In this section:

* Question layout
* Question text layout
* Use of colour
* Font type and size
* Word emphasis
* Instructions for the user
* Response options

### Question layout

Use consistent spacing between questions, instructions and response options to easily distinguish between these different question parts.

* All questions should begin with a number, followed by text.
* If there are no question-specific instructions, the response options should be placed below the question text.
* If question-specific instructions are needed, they should be placed between the question text and response options.
* Do not use lines within a question (for example between the question text and response options).

### Question text layout

* Left align text and use a ragged right margin.
* Each line should be between 40 and 60 characters. Do not split names or titles between lines unless this creates very short or long lines in comparison to the rest of the question text.
* Leave two spaces between sentences.

If using inserts ensure that all inserted text is indistinguishable from the surrounding text (for example, using the same font type, size and colour).

### Use of colour

Minimise the use of colour and pattern. Colour and pattern should only be used if distinguishing certain types of information (for example, branding, question-specific instructions). Also, note that colour can influence how accessible the content is for people; refer to the [Government Web Accessibility](https://webtoolkit.govt.nz/guidance/about-the-standards/) and Usability Standards to make sure your questionnaire is fit for purpose.

* Background colour for the content pane should be a light shade of colour. A high saturation colour (for example, very bright colours) should not be used for backgrounds.
* If possible and appropriate, background colour may be used to distinguish between different sections of a questionnaire.
* If possible, distinguish question-specific instructions by putting instruction text within a box of slightly lighter background shading.
* Use black text in the content pane unless:
  + displaying a hyperlink in which case blue text should be used
  + an error message needs to be displayed within the content pane in which case red text should be used.

### Font type and size

Use Arial Māori font if possible or at least a clean, easy to read font.

* If a questionnaire is divided into sections use 16pt headings for each section.
* For question and response options, use 12pt font. If using font size to distinguish question-specific instructions from question and response options, use 11pt font for instructions.
* Question text must be written in sentence case.
* Response category text should be written in lower-case, unless the response category needs to begin with capitals (for example, country names).

### Word emphasis

* Do not use underlining as this can be perceived as a hyperlink.
* Do not use italicised text as it is difficult to read on screen.
* Only emphasise words or phrases if absolutely essential. Emphasise words or phrases with bold text.

### Instructions for the user

Instructions should be placed where they will be needed by the respondent.

#### Response format instruction

* Instructions relating to the response format (for example, "Select all that apply") should be the first sentence of question text.

#### Procedural instruction

* Only include procedural instructions that are essential to respondents' completing a question. An example of an essential procedural instruction is to tell respondents to click on an arrow of a drop-down box to find their answer. Usability testing can help determine where procedural instructions are necessary.

#### Question-specific instruction

* Identify question-specific instructions by using font a size smaller than the question and response options or, if possible, by using lighter background shading.

### Response options

* Use [radio buttons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_button) for single response questions.
* Use check boxes for multiple response questions.
* Radio buttons and check boxes should be to the left of the response category text.
* All response options within a question must be visible on the screen without the use of scrolling. If this is not possible, consider putting response options into two columns.
* Response options should be displayed vertically.
* Some scalar questions (for example horizontal numeric scales) and matrix questions may be displayed horizontally, but horizontal display of questions should be minimised and reserved for these types of questions only.
* If response text runs over two lines, radio buttons or check boxes should align with the first letter of response text.
* Text box answer spaces should be displayed on the right of the response text.

## Response formats

In this section:

* Non-response
* Closed response
* Open response
* Matrix questions
* Ordinal scales

### Non-response

For a consultation there should not be any mandatory questions in a questionnaire.

### Closed response

Closed response questions include single response and multiple response questions.

#### For single response questions

If it is not obvious from the question (for example, yes or no questions), begin questions with the instruction "Select one answer only."

* For multiple response questions, include an instruction to ensure respondents know to select more than one response (for example, "Select as many \_\_\_ as you need to show \_\_\_"). This is best placed at the beginning of the question text.
* Try to limit response options to a single column (for example up to eight response options).
* If it is necessary to have more than 8 response options or responses will not be visible without scrolling down the page, use columns. As a guideline:
* If there are between 9 and 12 categories, use two even columns.
* If there are between 13 and 20 categories, use three even columns.
* If there are more than 20 categories, consider using a drop-down box with search functionality.
* If using more than one column, use space to ensure that each column is clearly distinguishable from the other. Ensure that the response boxes are clearly linked to the correct response text within a column and will not be confused with other response options.

#### Other – please state

Some questions will have an "other" category. In most cases this category should be labelled "other – please state" with a text area for respondents to type their answer.

* Respondents must be required to first select the response option "other – please state" via radio button or check box before writing their answer in the text area.
* If possible, the text area should be made inactive until a respondent selects the "other - please state" option. The inactive area should be greyed out as a visual cue to respondents that they are unable to type in this text area. The text area should then become active (that is, a respondent is able to type in the text area). An active text area will be white.

#### Drop-down boxes

* Only use drop-down boxes if asking a fact-based question. An example of a situation where drop-down boxes are appropriate is asking respondents for their country of birth. If respondents will not know their answer after reading the question, limit the number of response options and show all response options on a single screen.
* Avoid using drop-down boxes unless there is a clear advantage to using one. For example, when selecting an answer from a drop-down box is easier than typing in an answer.
* If using a big classification (for example, countries), ensure there is a search functionality within the drop-down box.
* Do not use drop-down boxes for multiple response questions.
* If using a drop-down box, set a default text mask such as "-click here-" or "-select one-". Do no leave the drop-down box blank or use default answers (for example "-New Zealand-") as respondents may not realise they need to select a response. Default answers send a blank response back to the server unless the respondent clicks on them.

### Open response

Open response questions require text answers to be entered instead of selecting an option (or options) from a range of responses. Either text boxes or text areas can be used for open response questions depending on the type of answer required.

#### Text boxes

* Text boxes are short input fields used for questions like date of birth.
* Split text boxes into the format required to answer the question correctly. For example:
  + an address question with multiple text boxes presented vertically on multiple lines
  + date questions with multiple text boxes presented on one line with day, month and year boxes.
* Size text boxes to assist respondents to identify what answer is required from them. For example, in date questions, the year text box should be bigger than the date and month text boxes.

#### Text areas

* Text areas are for narrative entries, used for open-ended questions (such as comments or feedback).
* Set a limit for the maximum number of characters respondents can type into the text area.
* The visible size of the text area is best displayed as slightly bigger than the size needed for the maximum number of characters. Note that the visible size of the text area can differ depending on respondents' browsers.
* If possible, size the text area to allow respondents to review their answers without having to scroll in the text area.

#### Numeric responses in open response questions

**Dollar values**

* A "$" display mask should appear automatically before the beginning of the text box.
* Ensure the size of the text box is appropriate for possible answers.
* If possible, consider using digital groups. For example:
  + Break up response boxes into logical groupings for dollar values
  + Use a comma after every third digit e.g. 1,000,000. This should appear automatically.

**Dates**

* Dates are recorded in the format dd/mm/yyyy or mm/yyyy.
* Place labels below or in front of the text boxes to state which part of the date respondents are entering into each text box.

### Matrix questions

* Do not use matrix questions unless necessary (for example when they prevent repeating questions or allow easy comparison between items).
* Do not use matrices for 'check all that apply' questions.
* Minimise the number of items within the matrix grid.
* If it is necessary for respondents to scroll through the matrix, freeze or lock column headings so they remain visible as respondents scroll through. This could mean repeating the headings further down the matrix if this function is not available. Note this is similar to the 'freeze panes' function in Excel.
* Do not double-bank questions or items into several columns.

#### Matrix question display:

* Display the questions or items vertically with horizontal response categories.
* Response boxes should be placed underneath the appropriate column headings.
* Ensure the response text is clearly associated with the corresponding response boxes by using spacing, shading, or lines.
* Consider horizontal shading to lead the eye across the matrix. Avoid vertical shading.
* Use the appropriate instructions for the question. For example, "Select one response in each row" rather than "Select one response."
* Consider automated greying of non-applicable answer spaces if possible.

### Ordinal scales

Ordinal scales measure degrees or levels of something, for example, opinions or attitudes.

* If necessary, response options for ordinal scales can be presented horizontally to help convey the idea of a scale.
* The response boxes must be equidistant to avoid bias.
* Place response text close to the relevant response option, distinguishing it from the other response options on the scale.
* Ensure the scale fits on one line and does not break over two lines.

## Online questionnaire functions

In this section:

* Login to answer questionnaire
* Automated functions
* Edits and checks
* Help text
* Bilingual or multilingual questions
* Summary screens
* Progress indicators

### Login to answer questionnaire

* Ensure the login process is as simple as possible. Minimise the number of steps needed to complete the login process.
* Provide clear procedural instructions on the welcome page to ensure respondents can understand and complete the login process.
* Avoid using characters in log-in identifiers which are hard for respondents to distinguish (for example 0 and O).

### Automated functions

* Use automated calculations using answers from a question or previous questions to assist with the responding process.
* Use automatic routing to route respondents to relevant questions based on their answers to previous questions.
* If possible, include a function which will allow respondents to undo the automation if necessary. It should be clear to respondents what has triggered the automation.
* In long surveys or where there may be multiple people working on the same response, consider an option for respondents to go directly to sections. This is useful when more than one respondent will answer the survey.
* If possible and appropriate, include a 'resume' function, where respondents can save their answers to a partially completed questionnaire and return to it at a later date.

Inserts:

* Automatically insert information from respondents' previous answers within the current survey when appropriate, but restrict the use of inserts to those that are essential to the question.
* Check the logic of inserts carefully as they can impact on how a question reads on screen. For example, when an insert is used, words could be omitted from a question because of non-response to a linked question.

### Edits and checks

* Edits can be useful to obtain consistent formats (for example, dates and plausible values).
* Minimise the total number of edits to avoid respondent frustration.
* Use automated functions instead of applying edits to questions.
* In a page-by-page design, display error messages immediately (before a respondent can move to the next question) so respondents are able to keep their focus on answering that particular question.
* Where edits must be delayed (for example in a scrolling design), error messages need to be made noticeable within the page by using red text close to the question.
* Error messages should provide specific information about the error and the action the respondent must take to correct it. Generic messages should only be used for system errors.

#### Text format for error messages

* If warning or error messages are to appear in a pop-up box, the text should be black. If the warning or error messages are to appear within the page (for example, if a respondent did not answer a question), the message should appear in red text to ensure respondents notice it.
* Error message font should be the same size and style as font used for questions and response options (Arial Maori, 12pt).

### Help text

* Detailed background information or lengthy definitions and instructions should be presented separately to questions.
* Respondents should access this non-essential information through hyperlinks or hover-over functions. Use hyperlinks for longer, detailed information and use hover-over functions for short notes.
* When writing help text, avoid large blocks of dense text.

### Bilingual or multilingual questions

* If more than one language will be used to complete a questionnaire, consider whether an alternative language is best displayed through a fully translated page or a hover over function.
* If it is likely for respondents to be bilingual, consider using a hover-over function with respondents' dominant language so they can check their understanding (for example, of one question).
* If it is likely that respondents are very proficient in the alternative language, consider accessing a translation by clicking to a fully translated questionnaire.
* It may also be possible to translate to the alternative language on a question-by-question basis. However, ensure this is not too much burden for the respondent to go between questions or languages otherwise they may be less likely to use the translations.

### Summary screens

* Consider using a summary screen before respondents submit their questionnaire to feed-back to respondents the key information they have provided.
* If edits and checks have been used to validate respondents answers, a summary screen may not be necessary.

### Progress indicators

* Evaluate the need for a progress indicator. Progress indicators may not be necessary in a scrolling design, as the scroll bar helps to denote respondents' progress through the questionnaire. They also may not be necessary in short questionnaires.
* When programming a progress indicator, determine the best way it can be programmed. Examples of this are whether it is measured on the amount of questions left or the time left to complete the questionnaire, whether it is shown continuously throughout the questionnaire or at certain points, and, whether it is displayed as a graphic or text.
* Progress indicators may encourage people to respond more completely as they can see their progress through questionnaires.

## Glossary of questionnaire terms

For questionnaire development (with thanks to Statistics New Zealand for allowing use of their glossary).

### Action buttons

Buttons or which allow respondents to take a certain action within the survey. For example, going to the next or previous pages, submitting the survey, or, saving the survey.

### Automated functions

Automated functions includes calculations using respondents' answers, routing, and if necessary, the ability to navigate to different sections within a questionnaire.

### Drop-down boxes

Drop-down boxes are a type of response format where a respondent has to click on the box to reveal response options, find their response option and click on that option.

### Hard edits

A hard edit is triggered when an answer does not comply with the edit rules and is outside a list of likely responses. Respondents' answers must be corrected to one that is accepted as a response. The 'suppress' button on the appearing error message is not active and respondents cannot continue with the questionnaire until they have corrected their answer to a likely response.

### Hover-over function

When respondents hover their mouse over the question to retrieve help notes or bilingual translation.

### Hybrid scroll page design

A hybrid scroll design is a questionnaire which has questions grouped onto one page which respondents need to scroll to get to, but they also need to click to the next page to get to the next set of questions. This design is complex and should be avoided.

### Inserts

An insert is used to make questions more flexible and personalised. For example if the relevant information is known, electronic questionnaires can automatically insert "he is" or "you are" etc.

### Line spacing (or leading)

The vertical space between lines of text.

### Matrix questions

A matrix question has two or more columns of response options that a respondent must read and select an answer from each column.

### Multiple response questions

Multiple response questions allow respondents to select more than one response.

### Page-by-page design

A page-by-page design is a questionnaire with one question per page unless some questions are grouped and fit onto one screen. To get to further questions, respondents need to click to the next page. All questions are visible on one screen.

### Primacy effects

A tendency to select from the first few options presented in a list of responses or instructions.

### Procedural instruction

An instruction which tells respondents how to complete a certain task such as clicking on the arrow of a drop-down box to find their answer.

### Ragged right margin

A ragged right margin means text has not been justified, therefore text lines do not all end at the same point.

### Response format instruction

An instruction which tells respondents how to respond to a question, for example, "Select the group or groups which.." or "Select one answer only."

### Scalar questions

Scalar questions ask respondents to choose one answer from a scale.

### Scroll page design

A scrolling design is a questionnaire with all questions on one page and respondents have to scroll to get to all the questions. This design is depicted by a scrolling bar on the right hand side of the page.

### Soft edits

A soft edit is triggered when an answer does not comply with the edit rules and is outside the list of likely responses. If an unlikely answer is entered an error message appears on the screen. The respondent can then choose to confirm the response or suppress the edit.

## Final checklist for online questionnaires

**Do** leave plenty of free text space for people to express their opinion. Free text may be more difficult to analyse and take more time – but you do want to hear what your participants want to say – don't you? You understand how frustrating it can be when the character count for the text box shows a minus amount of space for characters and you haven't finished getting your point across.

**Do** give your questionnaire a title that is short and meaningful to the reader. (Does the title tell you what's in the tin?)

**Do** state the purpose of the questionnaire clearly and tell participants what how and when the results will have an influence.

**Do** make sure that full information is easily accessible and available in 'layers' i.e. concise information first with "click through" to more details. Most people are reluctant to download and print large documents with lots of pages.

**Consider** using a response bar so that participants know how much more there is to complete.

**If** possible allow participants to save and return at a later date and to keep a copy for themselves.

**Don't** assume people will understand your jargon or acronyms. Give full explanations.

**Test** and test again.

**Consider** how you are going to collate the responses to report them to the decision maker. Will this questionnaire enable you to compile an informative report?

### Further reading

* [Wikihow - Develop a Questionnaire for Research](http://www.wikihow.com/Develop-a-Questionnaire-for-Research)
* [Market Research Society](https://www.mrs.org.uk/)
* [Small Business Development Corporation - Market Research: How to write a questionnaire](https://www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au/how-to-write-a-questionnaire)

1. [IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum](http://www.iap2.org.au/resources/iap2s-public-participation-spectrum), International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)