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Community Engagement and Sustainable Development

Glossary and FAQ

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Glossary

Consumer	In this context, we use the term consumer in a broad sense to describe an individual or household unit.
Consumer behaviour	Refers to the choices made by individuals or households units on a daily basis about what resources to consume. This includes purchasing behaviour, but also wider resource use behaviour such as riding a bicycle, or walking rather than travelling by car.
Evaluation	A process that aims to assess, systematically and objectively, the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in the light of their objectives.
Impact	Direct or indirect changes in the existing situation, whether beneficial or adverse, planned or unplanned, resulting from a specific act or series of acts.
Indicator	A substitute measure for a concept that is not directly observable or measurable.
Intervention	The activities or processes being evaluated.
Monitoring	The regular collection and analysis of information.
Organisation	The Local Authority, Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) as an entity, or individual LSP partners.
Organisational decision	Strategic decisions made by the organisations listed above.
Partnership	Organisations working within a structured framework to develop a relationship that exhibits full mutual support for the identity and all aspects of the work, as well as the well-being of each organisation

FAQ's

WHAT IS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

The phrase community engagement has come to mean a range of activities based in communities that involve community members in active participation. In preparing for this work we identified four ways:

Within the general context of public participation the term 'community engagement' is used to refer to four types of types of activities:

1. involving community members and / or organisations in decisions about that affect their neighbourhoods
2. encouraging community members to become involved in activities and / or services delivered at a neighbourhood level
3. community members working with others to address needs they have identified in their community
4. activity that creates strong communities, which in turn contribute to wider social goals

There is a general lack of clarity about how the word is used, but a review of the theoretical contact of community engagement will identify that a core driver in community engagement is power and the sharing there of.

Arnstein¹, Wilcox² and others have developed ladders, which illustrate identified levels of community participation, which are based on the principle of sharing power. Wilcox identifies five interconnected levels of community participation. These are;

Information
Consultation
Deciding together
Acting together
Supporting individual community initiatives

The ladder described by Arnstein has similarities, but goes further to finish with citizen control. What ladders like these and the four area of engagement tell us is that the broad term community engagement has within it many differing strands of activity.

A full and detailed description of 'Community Engagement' can be downloaded from the Community Engagement website. For the full description, please [click here](#).

¹ Arnstein S. *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, in the Journal of the American planning Association, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224

² Wilcox D. *An A to Z of Partnerships*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation 1999

WHAT IS SOCIAL CAPITAL?

“Social capital refers to the collective value of all "social networks" [who people know] and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other ["norms of reciprocity"].”³
It has been proposed that social capital works through producing a range of benefits that come from:

- trust
- reciprocity
- information
- cooperation

Found within social networks.

Putman concludes that social capital works through multiple channels including⁴;

- a. “information flows (e.g. learning about jobs, learning about candidates running for office, exchanging ideas at college, etc.) depend on social capital
- b. norms of reciprocity (mutual aid) are dependent on social networks.
 - Bonding networks that connect folks who are similar sustain particularized (in-group) reciprocity.
 - Bridging networks that connect individuals who are diverse sustain generalized reciprocity.
- c. Collective action depends upon social networks (e.g., the role that the black church played in the civic rights movement) although collective action also can foster new networks.
- d. Broader identities and solidarity are encouraged by social networks that help translate an "I" mentality into a "we" mentality.”

Social capital is an important consideration in community engagement as it informs how we develop and deliver community engagement activities and how and why people engagement in them.

³ Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

⁴ Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone. The collapse and revival of American community*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

WHAT IS MORE SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR?

In order to judge whether community engagement promotes more sustainable behaviour by organisations and individuals, it is necessary to identify key features of more sustainable behaviour. We have therefore briefly summarised some recent attempts to measure sustainable behaviour by organisations and individuals. We have also held an internal CAG discussion on the subject.

Organisational Change

A new project managed by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) – Local Evaluation 21, is designed to help authorities to self-evaluate the quality and progress of local processes for sustainability. The evaluation primarily considers local authority *processes* for sustainable development but also considers *progress* under 15 headings ranging from employment to social cohesion.

Individual and Household change

Sustainable consumption has been the subject of much discussion during the current UK Sustainable Development Strategy review. To help inform the debate, the Central Office of Information commissioned a literature review into consumer behaviour and sustainable development. This has recently been published in two reports (*The Impact of Sustainable Development on Public Behaviour* and *Driving Public Behaviour for Sustainable Lifestyles*, Andrew Darnton 2004.)

In the second report, Darnton discusses projects that have attempted to define sustainable lifestyles, with a focus on reducing or improving environmental impact and on social activities to improve communal quality of life. Although sustainable development is often seen as actions to improve economic, social and environmental goals, activities to improve personal economic and social benefit are generally excluded from definitions of sustainable lifestyles. This is perhaps because these are almost automatic for most individuals, whereas activities to further communal environmental and social benefits are less widespread. But a further caveat must be added – for people with a very low quality of life – actions to promote individual economic and social benefit, could well be seen as contributing to sustainable development.

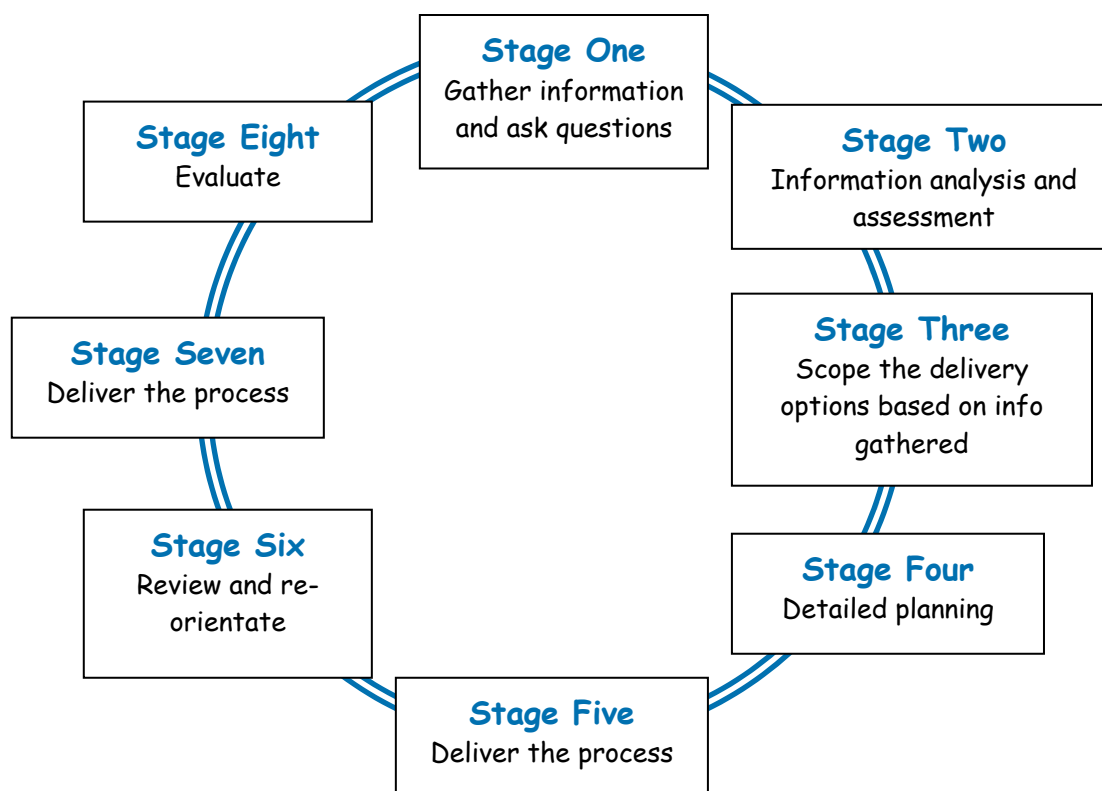
Darnton proposes an ‘exploratory framework for a sustainable lifestyle’ based around 13 groups of behaviours ranging from energy use to neighbourliness. .

HOW DO I PLAN A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT?

Planning Community Engagement – an Outline Process

Community engagement is a flexible and responsive process, and all effective programmes have some recognisable stages within them. The eventual outcome including the impact of the work is dependent on all of these stages being carried out. Here we outline these key stages as a basic introductory tool.

The key stages of a community engagement process:



The figure above outlines eight key stages in planning and delivering a community engagement process. In practice these stages do not have clear cut beginning and ending periods but merge together. At all stages deliverers will also need to work collaboratively with other stakeholders.

These stages are briefly outlined below.

Stage one: Gather information, ask questions

During this stage the framework for the engagement process is established, so that the process is productive, relevant and is not a damaging one it is essential that some initial issues are worked through. The responses to these issues will then inform the development of the process.

Some issues include:

- What is the purpose / aim of the engagement?
- What will the eventual outcome include?
- Who is going to be engaged?
- What can those engaged influence or change?
- What barriers might exist to people becoming involved?
- Who is playing what role?
- What resources are available to support the process?
- What skills, knowledge and information do everyone involved need?

Stage two: Information analysis and assessment

Once all the initial information is gathered an assessment of what this information means in terms of developing an effective process and choosing methodologies needs to take place.

For example the level of resources available will inform the kind of method used; similarly the level of power and / or influence that participants have also give the method an initial shape.

This assessment may also lead to negotiation with partners to change the baseline position. This might include, for example, training for community engagement deliverers to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and information required or negotiation with stakeholders about the purpose or outcomes of the process.

Stage three: Scope the delivery options based on info gathered

After analysing the information it becomes possible to begin to develop options for delivery. It is crucial that a full range of options are considered rather than a single response and that this option development involves community members, and other stakeholders.

For each option it is useful to look at the pros and cons, perhaps undertaking a SWOT analysis or similar to compare each options relative benefits.

Stage four: Detailed planning

Once initial options are scoped, stakeholders can negotiate a way forward or chosen option. Following this agreed decision it becomes possible to start to develop the final and detailed planning of how the engagement process will be delivered and through what method. This detailed planning is enhanced if it includes establishing how the process will be monitored and evaluated.

Stage five: Deliver the process

Once a delivery process has been agreed and planned in detail it is time to get on with it. However, it useful to record the activities within the process and your and others reflections on what is happening and being achieved.

Stage six: Review and re-orientate

At a point or points agreed with the stakeholder it is good practice to review process against the planned action, and change the plan if needed and agreed. This review may revisit the key issues from stage one as well as looking at the efficacy of the process.

This review process may lead to the process being changed or modified.

Stage seven: Deliver the process

Once a delivery process has reoriented, if necessary, it is time to get on with it again while continuing to record activities and the process and your and others reflections on how it is going and what is being achieved.

Stage eight: Evaluate

While you may work with other stakeholders through the process to review what is going on, a more structured evaluation is also helpful. Such an evaluation generally focuses on both *process* (inputs and throughputs) and *impact* including outputs and outcomes.