

## The community engagement process

### Speed read

- Invite a diverse range of community members, leaders and groups for varied knowledge and perspectives into the community engagement process.
- Tailor each community engagement process to work with the complexity and diversity of communities.
- Remember that the community engagement process is not linear. Parts of the process may happen in order, at the same time, overlap, or merge.

### Key points

The core elements of community engagement are:

#### Understand the community/ communities

Develop a community profile to enhance understanding. Research and explore:

- the history of the local area, culture, demographics
- First Nations knowledge
- existing social, community and organisational networks
- resources available to communities
- assets and strengths that exist in communities
- hopes, aspirations and priorities of communities
- hazards that exist in and around communities
- level of community awareness of hazards
- previous community requests for assistance or risk reduction action.

#### Establish and strengthen relationships

Establish and maintain strong, positive relationships between community and partners by:

- agreeing on clear goals, objectives and intended outcomes
- confirming resources and timeline
- establishing effective channels for regular communication and feedback
- identifying and facilitating opportunities to share, develop, apply skills and knowledge
- developing and implementing processes to monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of the activities
- sharing and celebrating success together.

## Plan and prepare

Prepare and plan in a way that the community engagement process is flexible and adaptable. Develop a plan that includes:

- a strong understanding of the community
- a shared purpose for the community engagement process
- actions and activities to achieve the goals, objectives and outcomes
- agreed roles and responsibilities
- anticipated resource requirements (e.g. human, financial, equipment, facilities and information)
- a financial management plan or budget
- clear implementation timelines including significant milestones
- a risk management plan
- a learning and development plan
- a communications or media plan
- an agreed framework for monitoring progress and evaluating success (e.g. a program logic).

## Implement and monitor progress

Involve community leaders or groups throughout the process for successful implementation. Progress should be monitored.

When implementing community engagement actions or activities, consider:

- how diverse individuals and groups are included or invited
- how accessible different settings and times are for a variety of participants
- who is not being heard
- whether uniforms are appropriate during events or activities
- how local protocols will be honoured and reflected
- what significant dates or events that may reduce participation by the local community or partners
- where to host community meetings or activities e.g. appropriate and neutral venues can increase community confidence, trust and active participation.

## Review and evaluate

Review and evaluate against a clear framework regularly to understand what has been achieved throughout the community engagement process. Consider:

- developing a program logic
- taking a 'baseline' measure against which to measure outcomes
- having clear and measurable performance indicators or objectives
- implementing ongoing learning cycles
- collecting data and evidence
- conducting analysis
- reporting the findings and adjusting the process accordingly.

# Quick Guide

## Take action

- Use the [Practitioner's Guide: How to choose between community engagement approaches](#) (AIDR 2020)
- Use the [Practitioner's Guide: Understanding and addressing challenges](#) (AIDR 2020)
- Use the [Program logic template](#) (AIDR 2020)
- Review the [National Disaster Recovery Monitoring and Evaluation Database](#) for identifying past activities and indicators and evaluations

## More information

- [Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience Handbook](#) (AIDR 2020)  
<https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-community-engagement>
- [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Toolkit](#) (Taylor, Johnston & Ryan, BNHCRC 2019)
- [Reimagining program monitoring and evaluation for disaster resilience outcomes](#) (Parsons & Foster, BNHCRC 2020)