

Effective Engagement: building relationships
with community and other stakeholders

Book 3 the engagement toolkit



3.3 Briefings

Description:

Briefings are often a way of providing information on a specific issue or initiative to a special audience. The presentation may be delivered by an industry, government or organisation's representative, and is typically followed by detailed discussions in a question-and-answer format. Briefings are useful as a public relations activity when an identified group is going to be affected by a proposal. The use of existing meetings of social and civic clubs and organisations as a forum for briefings to inform and educate is often used.⁵

Briefings may provide some preliminary ideas of community issues based on questions and feedback at the briefing.

Objectives:

A briefing will inform stakeholders of a project, product or proposal and provide them with a chance to ask questions.

Outcomes:

Providing a briefing or briefings will ensure that an organisation will be working with an informed stakeholder group.

Uses/strengths:

- Used when stakeholders are identified as being more directly affected by an issue than the general population and you want to inform them first.
- Provides a forum to interact directly with a particular group and allows for detailed explanation of issues, circumstances and implications unique to the group.
- Allows sponsor to retain control of information/presentation.
- Allows sponsor to reach a large number of individuals who are not attracted to other participatory forums, as this forum is specifically designed for them.
- Provides an opportunity to expand project mailing list.
- Allows presentations to be tailored with specific information suited to different groups.
- Can build community good will.

Special considerations/weaknesses:

- Purpose and timeframe need to be stated clearly at the outset.
- If not appropriately targeted, project stakeholders may not be in target audience.
- The topic may be too technical.
- Does not provide a forum for making decisions.
- May raise expectations of the targeted audience.
- Stakeholders may be disillusioned because the process is used as a means to inform them and not take on board their ideas, interests and concerns.
- Concerns of stakeholders need to be recorded.

Resources required:

- Staffing
- Experts
- Facilitators
- Recorders
- Overhead projectors
- Data projectors
- Video slide projector
- Projection screen
- Printed information as handouts

Can be used for:

- Showcase product, plan, policy
- Communicate an issue

Number of people required to help organise:

- Medium (2–12 people)
- Individual

Audience size:

- Large (> 30)
- Medium (11–30)
- Small (≤ 10)

Time required:

- Long (> 6 months)

Skill level/support required:

- High (Specialist skills)
- Medium (Computer & other expertise)

Cost:

- Medium (AUD\$1,000 – AUD\$10,000)
- Low (< AUD\$1,000)

Participation level:

- Low (Information only)

Innovation level:

- Low (Traditional)

Method:

1. Prepare presentation materials using (e.g. PowerPoint, overhead transparencies, etc.) thinking about the specific interests of the target audience. Also take printed material and have background information available.
2. Select groups and make offers for a briefing (telephone and/or send letters to confirm date and times). It is important to accommodate group/community needs as much as possible.
3. Clarify whether the groups are willing to promote the event, or whether you need to provide promotional material (flyers, posters, newsletter articles).
4. KISS - keep it simple and short.
5. Bring visuals if possible, and talk about case studies or personal experiences to illustrate the points you want to make.
6. Outline opportunities for ongoing participation.

References:

- Ministry of Environment and Energy (1994) *Public consultation guide*, Toronto, Ontario
- Environmental Protection Agency (2002) 'Chapter 5: public participation activities and how to do them', *RCRA public participation manual*, US Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC
- Wates, N (1999) *The community planning handbook*, Earthscan, London

⁵ Ministry of Environment and Energy (1994) *Public consultation guide*, Toronto, Ontario.