

Effective Engagement: building relationships
with community and other stakeholders

Book 3 the engagement toolkit



3.7 Community Fairs

Description:

A community event intended to provide project information and raise awareness about particular issues. The fair includes a multiplicity of activities and events of interest to cater for the broadest range of people (e.g. sausage sizzles, rides and activities for children, young people's activities and events of interest to adults). The events incorporated within community fairs, if focused on the main issues, will act as magnets to encourage public participation and will raise awareness on this basis.

Objectives:

Community fairs provide a fun venue that will draw a crowd of all ages and backgrounds, and then use many different ways to inform and engage the participants on a community issue.

Outcomes:

The community fair will raise awareness of an issue or proposal, and provide a venue for collecting contact details and getting signatories to any submissions or alternate proposals.

Uses/strengths:

- Focuses public attention on an issue.
- Can create interest from media groups and lead to increased coverage of the issue.
- Allows for different levels of information sharing.
- Builds social capital, that is, people who are more willing and able to participate in community decision making and management.

Special considerations/weaknesses:

- The public must be motivated to attend.
- Fairs can be expensive to do well.
- The project's reputation can be damaged if the fair is not done well.¹⁰

Resources required:

- Publicity
- Venue
- Catering
- Staffing
- Moderator/facilitator
- Experts

- Recorders
- Artists or photographer
- Events organiser
- Cleaners
- First aid
- Other audio and visual recording and amplification
- Overhead projectors
- Printed public information materials
- Response sheets
- Data projectors
- Video
- Slide projector
- Projection screen
- Props for working in groups (pens, paper, pins, etc.)
- Furniture
- Children's requirements
- Entertainment and events
- Duty of care
- Insurance

Can be used for:

- Showcase product, plan, policy
- Engage community
- Discover community issues
- Communicate an issue

Number of people required to help organise:

- Medium (2–12 people)

Audience size:

- Large (> 30)

Time required:

- Medium (6 weeks – 6 months)
- Short (< 6 weeks)

Skill level/support required:

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

Cost:

- High (> AUD\$10,000)
- Medium (AUD\$1,000 – AUD\$10,000)

Participation level:

- Medium (Opinions noted)

Innovation level:

- High (Innovative)

Method:

1. Select a date and venue that will encourage the greatest number of participants to attend (generally weekends or public holidays). Liaise with key groups to avoid clashes.
2. Arrange for a number of activities and events of interest to various groups in the community (i.e. all ages, children, young people, adults, the elderly).
3. Provide low cost or free activities (rides, sausage sizzles, etc.) to encourage attendance.
4. Advertise and publicise the event with emphasis on the issue to be considered. Advertise starting and closing times.
5. Provide adequate staffing and consider the employment of volunteers.
6. Determine appropriate consultative activities for the fair. Organise the necessary duty of care and insurance issues.
7. Consider employment of an events manager.
8. Develop a plan of the site, and ensure all those participating know where they are to go. Consider some form of marking out sites (tape or stakes).
9. Prepare a traffic plan (for trucks, cars, etc.) including a site for parking.
10. Allow adequate time for setting up.
11. On the day, ensure that coordinators circulate to assist participants to focus on the major issue and to facilitate participation.

References:

- Department of Transportation (1997) *Public involvement and techniques for transportation decision-making*, US Department of Transportation, Washington. Available online: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/cover.htm> [accessed 07/06/2005]
- <http://www.iap2.org> [accessed 07/06/05]

¹⁰ <http://www.iap2.org> [accessed 07/06/2005]