

Top tips for engaging your community

2 minute read

What this is and who it's for

This is a list of our top tips on how to get your community involved in your work. It includes the things that motivate people to get involved and the golden rules to follow.

What gets people involved?

1. Personal motivation

Local causes, spaces and services are important to people. They may have used or be using that service themselves or may have visited the space when they were young. Don't underestimate the power of personal motivation – it's often the reason our much-loved services, places and spaces keep running!

2. Opportunity

Are you providing the right opportunities for people to get involved? If you are holding a public meeting does the timing suit people who may be working or have caring responsibilities? Are you providing alternative ways that people can get involved?

3. Information

People often feel that they don't have enough information about what's happening and how to get involved. Think about the people you want to reach and understand how they might receive the information. Posters and social

media are a great start, but word of mouth is still a big influence on how information gets out to communities. Talk to local people, projects and even the local shopkeeper – you’ll be surprised at how quickly information can travel.

4. A trigger (such as being asked!)

Have you asked people to get involved? A call to action or invitation combined with people’s personal motivation can mobilise lots of people to get involved and have their say.

The Golden Rules¹

1. Make it relevant to people

Show how your work and their involvement makes a difference.

2. Make an effort

A fun or thoughtful engagement event involving people will show them that you care about their input.

3. Go to where people are

This includes community centres or events and activities that are already happening.

4. Be hospitable and welcoming

Offering refreshments or food shows people you consider them and value their time. Don’t forget to say hello and greet people too!

5. Make it easy for people to get involved

Make sure you have thought about people’s needs and that the activities are

¹ Taken from Neighbourhood Planning community consultation: Eden Project

accessible. Remember that we're not all the same. Things we might take for granted include:

- I can read and write
- I have a postcode
- I can leave my home
- I have time
- I speak the same language
- I am confident to speak

6. Keep questions simple

If you are asking questions avoid jargon and keep them simple. Use softer questions so that it doesn't feel like a test.

7. Listen carefully to what people are saying

You may be surprised by what you find out.

8. Improvise and adapt

If you can't create formal engagement events, think about how you might create small interactions. Talk to people in cafes, parks or even on the street.

9. Share what people have said

It might inspire others to get involved