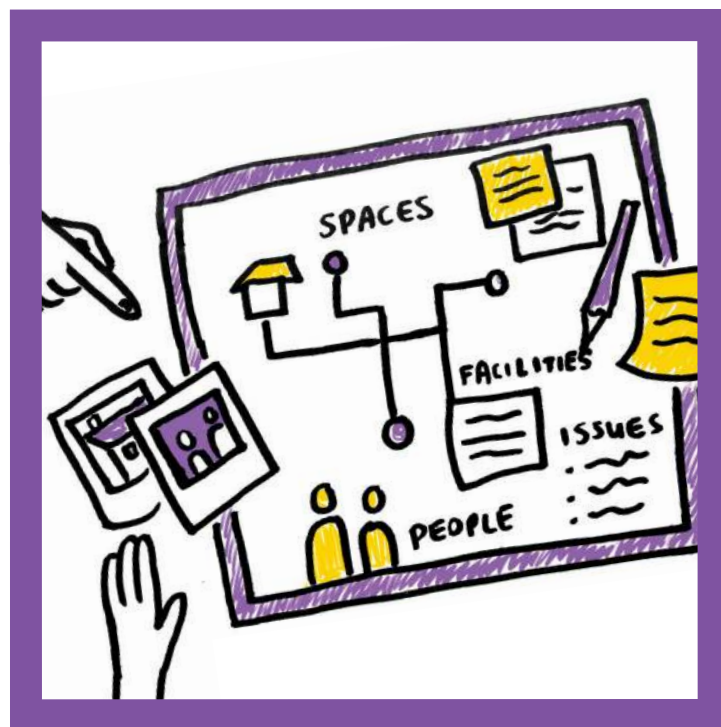


Carlow PPN

Community Consultation Toolkit



**A Guide for Good Consultation
with Communities in Carlow**

Foreword

Communities are best placed to determine the supports and services they need to flourish. Carlow Public Participation Network is delighted to bring you this consultation toolkit, which has been developed for and with the people of County Carlow. It is designed to be used by organisations seeking to design effective consultation processes with local communities, including statutory bodies, representative bodies and community groups.

The toolkit offers insights into what makes a good consultation process, tips on how to engage communities effectively and practical activity ideas and templates for designing your consultation.

The toolkit has been created because Carlow PPN wanted to identify and help bridge the gap between current practice and best practice in community consultation and engagement in Co. Carlow.

By analysing the views of local communities and public bodies on meaningful consultation, and by producing a user-friendly resource on effective consultation methods, Carlow PPN wishes to inform and facilitate strengthened consultation and engagement between communities and public bodies in Co. Carlow.

Carlow PPN has worked closely with The Wheel to create the toolkit. We acknowledge the voluntary contributions of the people of Co. Carlow at public meetings, focus groups and through hard copy and online surveys that find form in the pages of the toolkit.

We will work with our members and other stakeholders to ensure that this practical and useful resource book is used to shape effective, exciting and inclusive consultation processes.

What is the PPN?



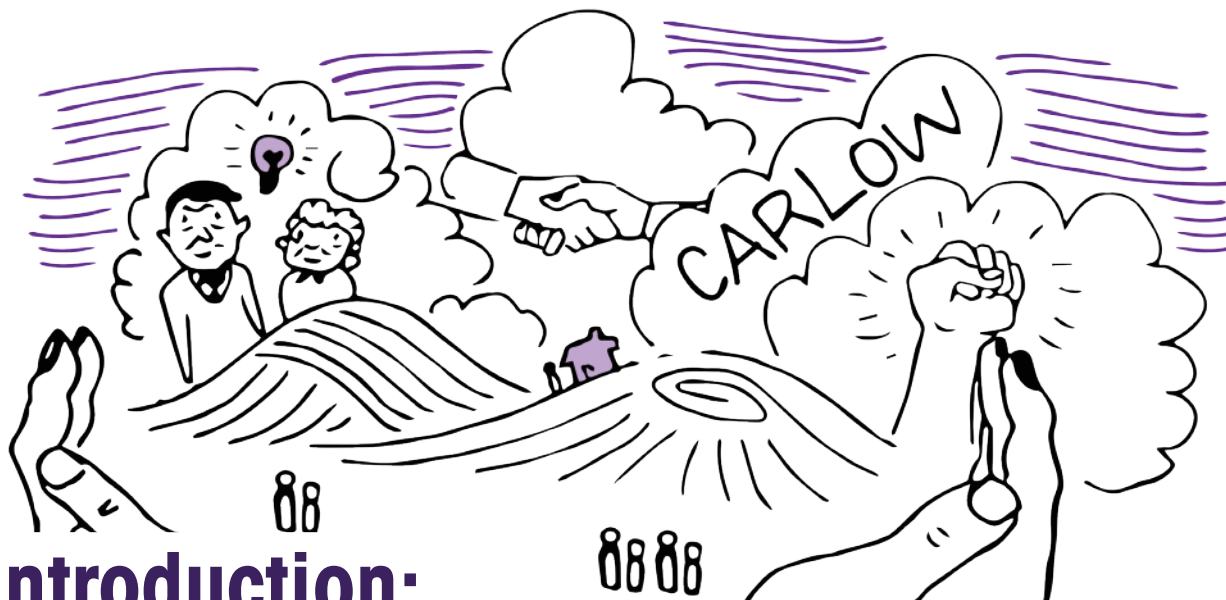
Carlow Public Participation Network (PPN) is a network of groups and organisations in Co. Carlow; community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental. The role of the PPN in every county is to:

- bring together groups/organisations and enable these groups to express a diverse range of views and interests
- ensure that the voice of local people is heard in local decision and policy making processes by providing representation on local decision making boards/committees
- provide the opportunity for networking, information sharing and communication amongst the groups
- identify and support training/capacity building needs for groups and representatives

We are committed to building the capacity of local groups and organisations to contribute positively to their own communities and to Co. Carlow.

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Introduction:

Why create a Community Consultation Toolkit for Carlow?

“ Rather than submit to cynicism and disillusion, we must rekindle our conviction that people and communities have a deep and instinctive desire to work for social and political participation and transformation..... Much is at stake when citizens are reduced to the status of passive recipients of policy and services. ”

- NI Roundtable on Wellbeing (2014)

How can we make Co. Carlow the best possible place that it can be? This was our starting question in creating this Community Consultation Toolkit.

Stemming from the belief that ordinary people already have the ideas, opinions, will and expertise to improve the community around them, we wanted to translate this belief into something practical that can make consulting with communities a positive experience for all.

- 🍃 **If the will and expertise is already there within the community, how can this be harvested?**
- 🍃 **Who needs to be involved?**
- 🍃 **What does successful community consultation look like and feel like?**

These are some of the questions we hope to answer in this toolkit. Starting from an understanding of what we mean by community consultation, and using practical tools to help you along every step of the process, we hope that this toolkit will have a good balance of information and practical steps to make any consultation process as rich as possible.

The toolkit is based on real local voices from people in Co. Carlow that we consulted with. We invite you to be open to these voices, that they will help in how you approach consultation with communities. We hope that communities will thrive and feel empowered as a result of an openness, curiosity and genuine listening from those creating the spaces for consultation to take place.

Carlow Public Participation Network (PPN) has taken the initiative to develop this Community Consultation Toolkit. The people of Co. Carlow have generously given their time and opinions in order to shape what they consider to be something valuable, that will enable important voices to be heard and for communities to be in a position to shape their local realities. Now it is over to you to read, explore, test and use the content within to enrich your work with local communities .

Communities are made up of people with something in common such as where they live, their shared identity – such as ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation or a common interest such as sport or culture.



Thinking about the extent to which people feel involved and included in your own community can be a good place to start, even before you set out on a consultation process. This may set the tone for how people will respond, or even if they will respond at all. If people don't feel they have a say, there might be a piece of work to be done to develop trust and confidence that their views are meaningful and can contribute to improving things.

If basic needs are not met for people, how does this affect their ability to engage? What else is happening to begin to address this outside of the consultation? In preparation for consulting with stakeholders, inform yourself about the wider issues affecting the community, their immediate needs and any challenges that have been revealed in previous consultations.

Community Consultation – why should we do it?

A positive experience of consultation can lead to better community engagement in general, helping to create the opportunity to engage with people in a meaningful way, building trust between the different players and creating a sense of shared ownership of services and infrastructure. The motivation for creating this toolkit has emerged from this desire for better community engagement.

So why should you engage the community in consultation:

1

The decisions and outcomes will be richer because of the contribution of people within the community;

2

The community should have ownership over any decisions made that will affect their lives and their local area;

3

Engaging as many different views as possible will mean everyone can learn something new;

4

Relationships and trust can be built with local communities that can last beyond the timeframe of the actual consultation;

5

Good community engagement will make Co. Carlow a better place to live!



“ Main thing is that you believe the consultation is real and that it is held at a point in the process where it can help frame the outcome; that there is a real process of engagement in making the action plan or strategy come about and there are built in reviews to keep it relevant; not being consulted on something already in draft form and you are being asked to tweak but not change. This happens a lot due to timescales with departments and it is not a real consultation process.”

– Respondent (2018)

What is the secret to good Community Consultation?

The key things that we have learned through the process of creating this toolkit:

Genuine Involvement:

Communities want to feel genuinely involved – that their opinions will really contribute to making a change and that they have input in shaping the agendas and decisions affecting their lives.

It Takes Time:

Proper community consultation takes time! Involving people from as early in the process as possible means that people can begin to shape plans from the outset. This might slow down the process slightly but the results will be richer for it.

Importance of Feedback:

Giving feedback throughout the process allows people to see what impact their involvement has made. Not just at the end of the process, but at each stage along the way. Keeping people informed will help improve things at each step, as well as letting people feel ownership over the process.



Q: What would make a great consultation?

1. That your group will be included
2. That what has been agreed will follow through
3. That it doesn't always mean volunteers do everything and that some form of help is given

- Respondent (2018)

Now we will go into the different stages of the community consultation process, from pre-engagement right up to assessing and acting on the results. Each section will include questions and templates to assist you as you go.

Steps For Effective Consultation

The steps for consultation really depend on each consultation. Consulting for too long will unnecessarily delay decisions made and affect the outcomes of the consultation. Consulting too quickly will not give enough time for consideration and will reduce the quality of responses. According to guidelines published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), any consultation should not be restricted by a set process but rather keep a focus on real engagement. Ideally, you should allow at least 12 weeks for an effective consultation process although there may be legitimate constraints that result in a shorter consultation time.

Planning

1

Getting Started

Get to know communities and groups; get to know the context of the community – including any issues and previous experience of consultation; identify initial stakeholders to talk to;

Asking Questions

2

Link in with existing local initiatives, events and services with the consultation question, being open to advice and guidance around how to best approach this within the community;

3

Getting the local community on board

From the outset this is so important as local people will be your most valuable resource throughout! Identify which groups to work with and make personal contact with them, sharing what you want to do and get their views and support on board;

Designing together with the community

4

Design the consultation together, including which methodologies and what approach to take. It can help at this stage to work with a smaller group of people who represent the different groups you want to reach;

5

First Concepts

Run plans past the stakeholders within the community, as well as colleagues, before proceeding;

Time and Money

6

It is important to work out what kinds of approaches are needed and how much the process will cost based on the outcomes of the design process with the community.

Consulting

1

Applying the Methods

Once the initial concepts are finalised, decide which methods will be used with which groups. There might be different stages to this, such as starting with a broad consultation to many people or it could be the other way around! Keep a record of numbers reached and, if possible, those who attend;

Being Flexible

2

Allowance should be made for changing something which is not working and trying a new tactic. This includes being responsive and changing to suit each stage as you go. This doesn't show failure, but shows that you are really listening!;

3

Who is Missing?

Are there groups that have been missed? Actively reach out to engage them. This might require different methods and a chance to refine the topic of consultation further from different perspectives;

Assessing Results

4

Staying in contact with people as you go means that people within the community could be involved in analysing the results – this can help to keep people interested and brings new insights at each stage. If this is not possible and the analysis is done separately from the community, it is important that the results are shared with the community;

5

Revisiting and Making Changes

Once feedback on results has been received from the community, you may need to revisit some elements, ask some further questions and make some changes;

Giving a voice and publishing

6

People want to see how their input has influenced the project for good. If people feel properly engaged and involved this can result in continued participation beyond the consultation. Involve people in publicising the results – within the different spaces in the community as well as in any separate spaces that you create. At this stage it is vital that you share the outcomes with all who have engaged throughout the process.



Preparation and Engagement

The more time spent on preparing to engage with the community, the richer the final consultation will be. When you are designing the consultation, set some time aside for initial planning and preparation. In cases where there is an annual needs analysis with the community, a lot of the groundwork would already be done and this can enable a shorter planning and preparation phase, and a more responsive community engagement process.

Actual Engagement

Applying the Methods

1

There might be different stages to this, e.g. starting with a broad consultation with many people and refining this through smaller group work like focus groups. Keep a record of numbers reached and, if possible, those who attend.

2

Who is Missing?

Are there groups within the community that have been missed? Actively reach out to engage them. This might require different methods and a chance to refine the topic of consultation further from different perspectives.

3

Being Flexible

If it's not working allowances can be made, it is okay. Try a new tactic and move on. This includes being responsive and changing to suit each stage as you go. This doesn't show failure but shows that you are really listening!

4

Don't Rush

We recommend a timeframe of 12 weeks for delivering and implementing the actual engagement with the community. However, this will not always be possible due to time constraints.

Presentation and Celebration

Giving a Voice

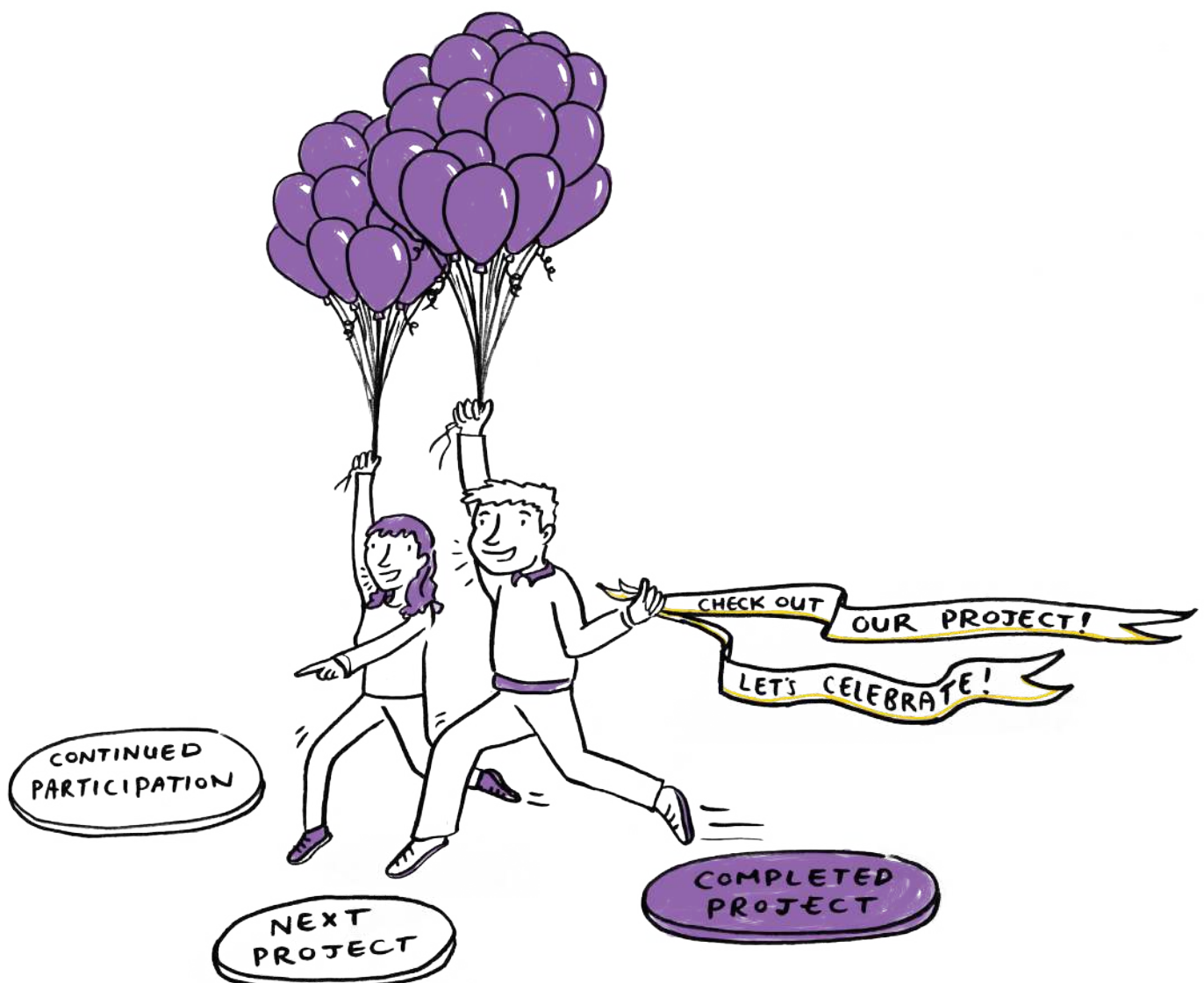
People want to see how their input has influenced the project for good. If people feel properly engaged and involved this can result in continued participation beyond the consultation. At this stage, it is vital that you share the outcomes with all who have engaged throughout the process.

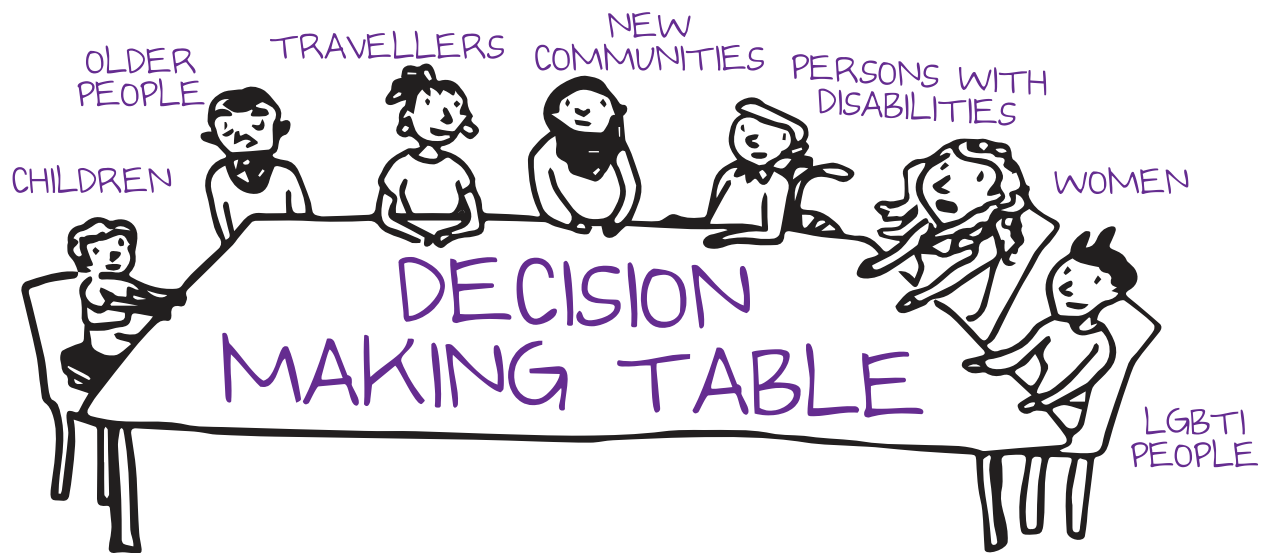
Celebration

Build in time for a celebration, celebrating the outcomes, next steps and the participation of all involved in the process. This might be as part of the publishing and presenting the results of the consultation, just some way to recognise the community ownership and engagement and celebrate all involved.

Publishing

Involve people in publicising the results. Create the space to share the results more widely beyond those who have engaged in the process but involving them to be the voice of the results.





How can we reach communities?

A good starting place is to identify the range of groups and individuals you wish to reach within communities. This will then inform the methods and approaches you decide to use. At every step along the way it is important to ask questions such as: Who might be left out? Who might be hard to reach? Identifying any barriers that might prevent people from engaging in such processes in the community might require you to use a different approach for outreach and engagement e.g. language, culture, distrust of particular institutions, literacy levels required, not aware consultation is taking place, lack of transport or broadband connections in rural areas. You may need additional resources to make sure that these voices are included in the process.

“ People with a disability don’t have a say in consultation
- Respondent (2018) ”

Identifying and Mapping Stakeholders

Taken from www.consultationinstitute.org here are five questions to consider when identifying stakeholders:

- 🍷 **Who is directly impacted by this decision?** Whose lives will change as a result of this decision? Who will have to change their behaviour as a result of this decision?
- 🍷 **Who is indirectly impacted by this decision?** Whose lives will change because others have been directly impacted by this decision? Who will gain or lose because of changes resulting from this decision? Are there any individuals or groups who will have to adjust their behaviour if particular conditions apply?
- 🍷 **Whose help is needed to make the decision work?** Who understands the likely impact of this decision on other stakeholders?
- 🍷 **Who knows about the subject?** Who has detailed knowledge that will help those implementing the decision to understand?
- 🍷 **Who believes they have an interest in the subject?** Are there organisations or individuals that have an interest? Has anyone been campaigning about this issue?



For more ideas on groups you could involve, check out this brilliant resource which might get you thinking outside the box, or for people you hadn't previously thought of:
www.communityplanning.net/useful/docs/who_to_involve.pdf

There are a range of groups you can choose to invite to any consultation process. The PPN is a network of hundreds of community development, environmental and social inclusion organisations that can be invited to participate in consultation processes: e.g. youth groups, active retirement groups, environmental groups, those engaging with homeless people, women's groups, LGBTI groups, residents groups, parents groups, new communities, etc.

The Invitation

The invitation to participate in a community consultation process can already include or exclude certain groups. Here are some tips to help design your 'invitation':



- 🍷 **Give notice** – Groups take community engagement very seriously, particularly when it affects them. Allow enough time for people to inform themselves about the issues, and also to engage with their local community and any particular interest groups.
- 🍷 **Time it right** – Suit the availability of the people you are looking to engage, e.g. parents may be more available in the mornings when children are at school. It might mean having separate spaces, e.g. morning, evening and weekend meeting options. Create opportunities for people to contribute if they are unable to attend, e.g. an online or telephone option.
- 🍷 **Reach out** – Particular communities can be harder to reach and so there might be special consideration needed in how and who the invitation goes to. You could partner with local groups to set the invitation and engage as partners in the consultation, e.g. local partnership, local resource centre, local youth service.
- 🍷 **Getting the invitation out** – Where will you advertise the invitation to engage? Community centres, social media, newspapers and radio are all good places to start. What are other spaces you can use? Posted letters to people's home will often get read. People respond well if the invitation is as personal as possible!

Importance of the Invitation

Carlow PPN and The Wheel organised a focus group meeting in Bagenalstown as part of the consultation toolkit process. At the start of the session we asked participants about their experience of consultation. Members of a local Active Retirement Group that attended fed back that they hadn't taken part in a consultation before. We asked why they came to this particular consultation event and they said they received a letter in the post from Carlow PPN inviting them to attend so thought it would be rude not to be there.

Which Methods to Use?

There are a range of methods for consultation included in this toolkit (See 'Tools and Templates' section on page 25). When deciding which methods to use, you might want to consider:



- ❖ **What is the size of the group you want to engage?** Do you want to generate a large amount of data in response to a question, or do you need a method that gets more personalised responses in smaller group settings?
- ❖ **Who do you want to engage?** Planning for methods that engage children will be different to those that would be used with a group of adults. Similarly, if you want to reach groups with a particular focus (e.g. groups of parents, people from LGBTI community, unemployed men) or those with additional needs, this may influence the language or approach you will choose.
- ❖ **What time and resources will each method require?** Some methods require more time for planning, others more time for delivery, and others again more time for the analysis afterwards. Whichever method you chose, keep in mind where the focus of time and resources will be for each step.

Creative ways to Consult Locally Case Study



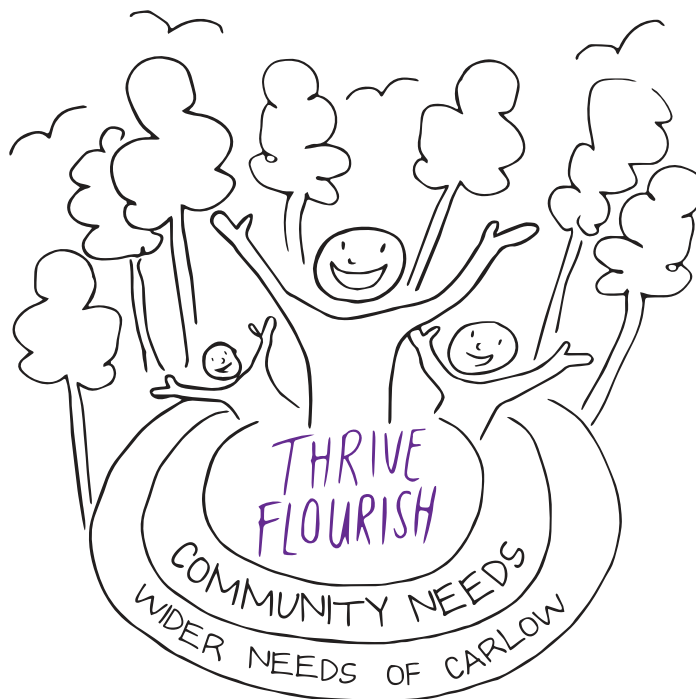
The Ballyfermot Skate and Play Park project is a collaboration between the Matheson Foundation and the Irish Architecture Foundation (IAF). People living in the Ballyfermot area were involved in the project from the start. The idea of building a skate park was originally suggested by kids and teens in the area. The IAF were very keen to embark on a “people-first design process” in order to learn more about what people in the area wanted before even setting out the brief to go forward with. Local schools, youth services, community centres, residents, Gardaí and local political councillors engaged in the process.

Initially, a number of events were organised, including meetings, workshops and consultation picnics and from this, a competition was held to select the winning project. The consultation process used features such as sand boxes and gaming technology to get inputs from the community on what the skate park should look like.

The project shows the importance of engaging with young people and the local community through non-verbal approaches, as often people cannot verbally communicate their thoughts but they can do it in a more creative way such as this.

Doing

The initial groundwork has been done, the invitation to engage has been thoughtfully and widely promoted, now it is time to engage. Hopefully at this stage you will already have had input from the community to inform the process and the appropriate methods to be used. The people being consulted should already have a sense of ownership over the process and the steps you will now take should be informed by what is most appropriate, based on this feedback.



“ What affects everyone can best be solved by everyone
- Anonymous ”

Participatory Budgeting

Case Study



‘€300K Have Your Say’ is a local democratic process led by South Dublin County Council, which facilitates citizens in a local community to directly decide how to spend a portion of a public budget in their area. It gives people direct power to determine spending priorities to improve their community.

Community groups and individuals, through a combination of locally facilitated workshops and an online submission of proposals, were asked for their ideas for how this budget could be spent. The ideas were assessed for their level of community benefit by a panel of elected councillors and council staff and the projects were costed. The local public was then invited, through a media campaign to circulate information and encourage voting, to vote online and

at polling stations, with the projects getting the most votes being selected to a combined total of €300,000. In 2017 and 2018, a total of 23 projects have been selected. Successful projects include provision of playgrounds, planting of native apple trees, free library book banks in public places and a multi-games wall.

The money set aside for this initiative is in addition to the annual budget for South Dublin County Council; the Councillors decided to set aside €300,000 extra discretionary funds to allow citizens to directly identify their own priorities for their community. This initiative is in the interests of enhanced democracy and citizen consultation.

Choosing a venue

People want to be made feel as comfortable as possible as this will bring out their best. Here are some things to consider:

- Is the venue familiar? Will it enable people to feel **comfortable** to contribute? Ensure the room is adequately heated and ventilated for comfort.
- Does the venue exclude particular communities? If so, is there somewhere that would be more inclusive of the groups you want to reach.
- How **accessible** is the venue? If there are stairs, will this exclude certain members of the community (e.g. wheelchair users, parents, older people)? What are the acoustics like? Is there a loop system for people with hearing difficulties?
- How suitable is the space for the approaches chosen? Are there tables and enough space available to do this effectively? Is internet access required and available?
- Can you offer **refreshments** for people (e.g. tea, coffee, biscuits)? Is there budget for this? (feedback suggests that people really appreciate it, so if at all possible this is recommended!).
- Do you know **how many** people you are expecting in advance? Pre-registration can help you to gauge the numbers expected, for example, through phone, email, online registration. Free online software such as eventbrite.ie and eventzilla.net are useful tools for online registration.

Working with different sizes of groups

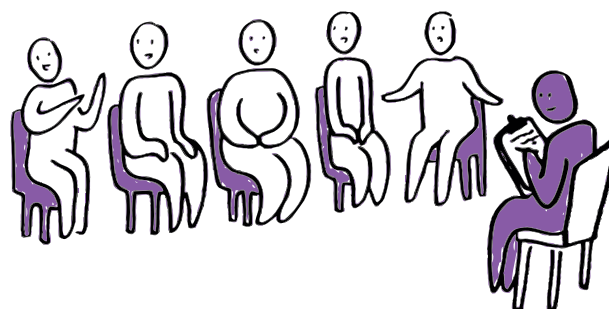
Any consultation process may include elements of individual, small group and large group engagement. The secret is to use the right approach at the right time.

Working with **large groups**, such as a public meeting, can work well when you want to share detailed information from an expert speaker and get immediate feedback from a wide range of people. However, not everyone feels comfortable to talk in such large group spaces and often a few voices can dominate and other voices can be missed entirely. In such cases, it might be helpful to include extra mechanisms such as a suggestion box, online feedback platforms such as twitter or electronic poll software, such as www.sli.do, feedback forms or some other way to include voices that may not have a chance to participate in the discussion.

If you are organising a big **public meeting**, a theatre-style set-up can be the best way to maximise participation for large numbers. Ensure there are enough chairs before the meeting begins and

push away any spare chairs if only a few people turn up. You may want to provide the opportunity to break up into smaller groups as part of a larger public meeting event – will the space enable this or do you need to plan for an additional space? How are the acoustics and will they allow for many smaller group conversations to take place?

Working with **smaller groups** is useful for drilling down into issues. If well facilitated, people are more likely to share their ideas in an open and constructive way and can avoid one or two people dominating. Smaller group work could work well after the initial work done within a consultation, when you are at the stage of trying or testing ideas, or looking to generate new ideas.



Workshops

Workshops can be used to engage as few as 8 people, while an upper limit of about 30 people can be facilitated comfortably, allowing people to effectively contribute. For more than 30 people you may need to think about a different methodology (see the 'Tools and Templates' section, page 25) to allow for many voices to be heard in a participative way. The use of paired work in the context of a wider group can help people to develop confidence in their idea to be able to share in the bigger group for feedback.

The lay-out of the space for workshops will typically depend on the methodologies chosen and the requirements of the facilitator. If you are working with an external facilitator, it is essential to check in with them in advance about space requirements and what equipment and resources they will need. How will you make a record of what emerges during the workshop? For example, do you want someone to take notes or will feedback be included as part of the session?

Focus Groups

If you are hosting a focus group, this will suit much smaller groups of people, usually between 6 and 10 people. Focus groups are the opportunity to have a more intensive conversation with a small group of people about a topic or question that is set in advance. In setting up a space to prepare for a focus group, a table with chairs around it can often make people feel at ease. Focus groups can be held in smaller spaces than public meetings or workshops. Care should be taken to avoid distractions such as people walking through.

One To One Meetings

Working in a one-to-one setting can be useful if you need more in-depth information or if there are particular questions needed with key individuals. These spaces can be quite time consuming to set up and deliver; however the data you will receive back will likely be quite rich in detail and may get people on board and invested in the final outcome. When working in this one-to-one context, it is important to be aware of your own power, and any other dynamics at play that might affect how someone will feel comfortable to engage.

Local Town Teams

The Roscommon Town Teams Project was initiated by Roscommon County Council in 2012. Town Teams were established in six key areas. Town Revitalisation team meetings were held in the six designated towns during late 2014 to early 2015. The Town Teams work collaboratively with retailers, local businesses, the community and voluntary sector and key agencies and service providers. The Town Teams were also provided with initial training on social inclusion best practices.

Facilitated workshops were held in each town to ascertain the views of local

Case Study



activists. An analysis was undertaken of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats locally. A vision was identified for each town, along with actions to achieve the vision. Training needs for community development champions were also identified.

Following the workshops, committees worked collaboratively with Roscommon County Council to draw up detailed action plans for each town. The Town Teams have taken a leading role in securing funding for collective actions.

Local Action Plans

Case Study



A voluntary local development group led a consultation process in Rathvilly to develop an action plan to address the needs of the local community.

They brought in outside expertise to work on the process, including designing a questionnaire for local residents. They also piggybacked on a public networking event that took place in the village and asked attendees to contribute three ideas to a wish list of things they'd like to see, which informed the design of the questionnaire. Local people were trained to disseminate the questionnaire.

Due to resource constraints, it was decided not to go door-to-door but to focus on places where people gather – volunteers approached local residents at local schools, the credit union, churches etc.

Local residents also had the option of responding to the questionnaire online, a link to it was put on the Rathvilly Community Development Facebook page. There were 120 responses to the hardcopy questionnaire and 220 responses to the online version, or more than 10% of the local population. Strong priority needs emerged from the consultation.

Working with the Media

Local and national newspapers and radio are some of the most effective channels for raising awareness of any public consultation process. Here are a few tips for working with the media:

1. **Know your media:** The Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) publish an annual media directory of local and national media. Read the local newspapers and listen to local and regional radio stations to identify programmes or sections of the newspaper where you could potentially promote your consultation.
2. **Be sensitive to deadlines:** Journalists work to very tight and inflexible deadlines. Respond to all media queries promptly. It is best to approach local newspapers at least three days before the copy deadline. The content of local radio programmes are often planned up a week ahead of broadcast. If you are reaching out to a national newspaper, contact them between 9 and 11 in the morning.
3. **What is the news angle?** Why would the readers or listeners be interested in this community consultation? How does it affect their lives? Does it relate to any issue that is currently in the news? Journalists are looking for content that is newsworthy, relevant and current.
4. **Know the five W's and the H:** Your press releases or media pitches should answer these questions: What is happening? Who is behind it? When is it happening? Where is it happening? Why is it happening? How will it happen?
5. **Press releases:** Do not attach your press release to an email; copy the text into the body of your email. Do not cc all of your media contacts. Send individual emails to key journalists and media with a personal introduction (where possible). It is acceptable to follow up with a phone call when you are dealing with the local media, but not the national media.

Working with Social Media



How to write a Submission

You may want interested groups and individuals to submit their views, ideas and recommendations in written form as part of the consultation process. When inviting people to make a submission, here are some tips to consider:

- 📌 **Introduce the issue for consultation**, where this has come from and what is known about this issue. If there is a 'Consultation Paper', it can help if this is briefly summarised for people, outlining the main points.
- 📌 **Make it clear why consultation is needed on this issue.** Outline the issue as well as the wider issues. Highlight any specific questions or areas you want feedback on about this issue. If there are particular proposals included in the Consultation Paper, explain how these would affect people, with specific examples to illustrate the points.
- 📌 **Provide a clear and straightforward template for people to use in response.** Keep questions simple and in a format that is accessible. (See the 'Tools and Templates' section, page 25).
- 📌 If it would be helpful, **provide some further links** that people can use to do further research on the issue.
- 📌 Invite people to leave their **name, organisation and contact email address** for any follow up questions or further spaces for participation that might emerge as a result of the submissions.



FURTHER READING: 'ACMA's Guide to Making a Submission'.
Visit www.acma.gov.au and the Irish Human Rights Commission public consultation on CEDAW (2016)

Suggestion Box

A suggestion box is a box placed in a public place such as a community centre, library, supermarket or town hall, where members of the public can post their ideas and comments in written form for an agreed period of time.

This can be useful as a way for people to make suggestions in a less formal and more discreet way. They can be a useful addition to a wider event to get additional feedback that could not be captured, e.g. at a public meeting where only a few voices are heard, or if the more formal processes do not enable everyone's contribution. This was particularly highlighted by the Fáilte Isteach and New Communities groups in Carlow as an approach that has been used successfully to involve local groups in decision making.

Drawbacks to using submission boxes include the possible 'invisibility' of such boxes, e.g. at the entrance to community or leisure centres and so do not get used; also there is a chance that a lot of disparate feedback could emerge and you may not be in a position to act on everything (or it may not be appropriate). If this is the case, it can be good where possible to give feedback of why certain ideas were not taken on board.

Use Plain English!

Ensure that any presentations, statements or instructions are written simply and in plain English. Avoid jargon. NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency) offers support and a good plain English guide. If you want to engage communities whose first language is not English, consider translating the invitation and basic information about the consultation into relevant languages spoken locally.

Designing a Survey

When designing a survey, here are some tips to consider:

- 🍷 Who is the survey for? e.g. general public or a particular group
- 🍷 How will it be disseminated? e.g. door-to-door, at meetings or online
- 🍷 Do you want to collect facts and figures, people's opinions or a mixture?
- 🍷 You will need to strike a balance between the amount of information you want to collect and the time it will take somebody to complete the survey – e.g. questions that require somebody to tick a box and open questions that need a bit of reflection 'do you think X, Y or Z is the main issue?' versus 'what do you think are the main issues?'
- 🍷 Remember that less is more when it comes to thinking about the length of your survey.
 - only include questions where the information will really inform the results
 - you should state at the beginning (or in a cover email if online survey) how long it will take to complete the survey
- 🍷 What capacity do you have to analyse the results of the survey?
- 🍷 Free online survey tools such as Survey Monkey or Smart Survey are a useful way of designing your survey. The advantage of using an online tool is that it collates responses for you and carries out basic analysis. See sample survey template in 'Tools and Templates' section on page 25. For links to online survey tools available, see 'Next Steps' section on page 33.
- 🍷 In situations where an online approach is not suitable, the online tool can still be used to design the survey and the results can be inputted manually – though this step can be time consuming depending on the number of survey responses.



Communicating Results

The importance of communication and feedback cannot be underestimated – throughout the process and particularly at the end. Below are some things to consider to help you to plan for communicating your results.

What ways will you communicate your results? Gathering individual email addresses from everyone who has been involved can be time consuming and may be unnecessary; use existing structures, e.g. community workers, community centres, your Public Participation Network (PPN), other local stakeholders, to enable ongoing communication about progress. Communicating the results is an opportunity to honour everyone who has contributed at each step in the process, right from the beginning. Make a note of the various groups that have been involved and plan how you will contact them to invite them to the final event.

If you are holding an event to present the results of the consultation, use the opportunity to celebrate the investment made by the community in the process.

While it is the final event, this may be the beginning of the community taking full ownership over the next steps of the process. Make sure and 'end well' for your role in the consultation – making it clear that the process has been driven by the community who have been engaged and invested in the process and outcomes, and doing any handover or sharing of contacts as needed.

Record and capture any learning from those you have been working alongside in the community at these final stages, for the learning for next steps as well as for any future community engagement and consultation.

Taken from www.toolkit.creativityni.org

“ I feel that opportunities now exist for stronger participation but local community organisations and groups don't participate in the opportunities given to them to frame their own communities. Again this might be historical as they might not always have seen changes occurring following consultations over the years.

- Respondent (2018)

”

Getting Local Community Buy-In Case Study



The Parish Pastoral Council in Leighlinbridge carried out a needs analysis of the community and spiritual need of three villages within the local parish, with a total population of approximately 1,000 households.

They successfully applied for LEADER funding and hired professional expertise to help design and deliver the consultation process. A hardcopy questionnaire was developed and they reached out to the local community to help disseminate it.

Sixty local residents responded and received training on filling out the survey. They went door-to-door to all the households in the

area and asked people to complete the questionnaire. Where no-one was at home, they left the survey to be filled out with a collection time but if it still wasn't completed, they did not pursue it. This allowed a clear cut off for the volunteers. The process had a 70% completion rate. The consultant analysed the survey results and the needs of local residents identified in the survey were developed into an action plan.

The process required significant resources but fostered a strong sense of ownership among local residents.

Reflection and Action

“ Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained.

- Helen Keller

”

Questions to ask yourself once the consultation is completed:

- 🍷 How well did we involve people in the community from the outset?
- 🍷 How well did we identify and overcome any barriers to participation?
- 🍷 Did the chosen methods deliver what we were looking for?
- 🍷 What surprised us in the results?
- 🍷 What impact has this community engagement had on our relationship with the wider community?
- 🍷 What have we learned for future community engagement?
- 🍷 How did we give feedback and is there anything else we need to do on this?
- 🍷 What will we do next?

Checking In

Once you have carried out your initial engagement activities, it can be good to ask the question: whose voices are we reaching and whose voices are not present yet? Have all stakeholders been considered? Has everyone had a chance to talk and be heard? This stage might require you to return to different areas of the community to reach out to groups that have not yet been able to contribute. Or it could be that, when you reflected on the initial engagement, there are people who already contributed that you would like to re-engage.

It is important to try to reach those who may not be involved in formal structures within the community. For example, feedback from consultations held with new communities was that they do not generally read local print media. They recommended using social media to reach these communities.

At this stage it may be helpful to begin to record some of the learning on the process as well as the results that you are discovering. There may have been contacts made in the process that would be good to nurture and follow up with for future engagement work. Finally, what is the plan for action? How are you going to implement the findings of the community consultation? Knowing even the tentative next steps will reassure those involved in the consultation that their input will lead to something for the community.



Ongoing Reflection with Groups

Regular and ongoing feedback along the process is critical, not just at the end.

Assessing Results

If possible, invite people within the community to be involved in analysing the results – this can help to keep people interested and brings new insights at each stage. If this is not possible and the analysis is done separately from the community, it is important that the results are shared with the community, including any suggestions that will not be taken on board and reasons why.

Revisiting and Making Changes

Once feedback on the consultation results has been received from the community, you may need to revisit some elements, ask some further questions and make some changes.

Giving Feedback

The importance of feedback at every step of the way cannot be underestimated. How you will do this may be different depending on the context. People should be able to comment and shape the outcomes of the entire process as it progresses. If the process will go on for an extended period of time, e.g. one year, plan to give feedback every three months. It is also important to be flexible and responsive to what might come back, as this may mean going in a different direction than where you had planned!

Use the existing structures that are there, e.g. through your local PPN and the local community and voluntary sector contacts that have been built up through the process will give you access to information and spaces to best share the feedback as widely as possible.

Whether this is sharing a report, a short summary of key points raised, someone coming out again to the community and discussing 'where to from here', or gathering people again for further discussion, refining and making a plan forward, it is critical that people can see the results of their input

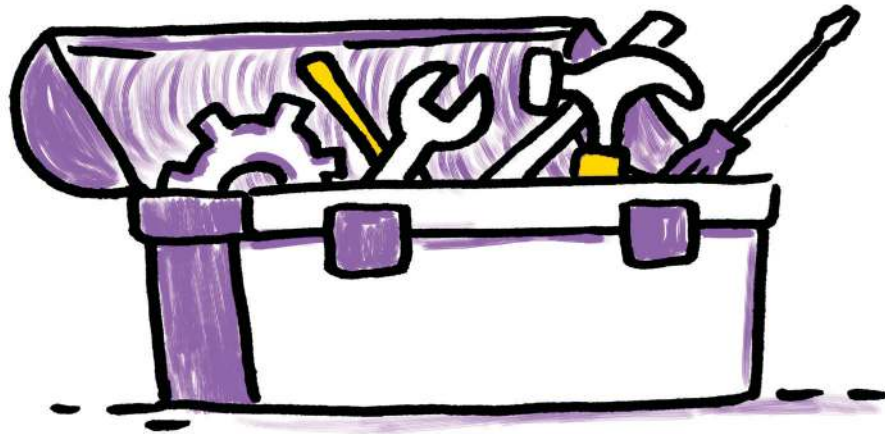


Focus Group Feedback

One participant in a focus group for young people used the way in which Amazon gives regular progress updates on orders as an example of good feedback. Where detail is available, share it. People want to get a sense that progress is taking place because of their input.

When collecting contact information from participants in the consultation, explain clearly how you will use their data. For example, you will use the information to provide an update on progress and/or to share the results of the consultation process. For more information on how to do this effectively, see The Wheel's GDPR toolkit (Next Steps, page 33).

Tools and Templates



Each consultation process is going to require a range of approaches and methodologies. Depending on the group and the approach, you may choose one over the other. The community could have useful insights into which methods will work best for them. You may need to bring in an outside facilitator for some methods. In planning which resource to use, you should also bear in mind which venue to use, as well as what size of group you plan to work with.

Planning

“

To accomplish great things,
we must not only act,
but also dream,
not only plan,
but also believe.

– Anatole France,
French poet and journalist

”



Before you begin actively planning the community consultation process, we invite you to pause and think about what you want to achieve. Here is a planning template to assist you:



Questions to ask yourself	Further support needed
What is the purpose of the consultation?	A conversation among staff and volunteers and the community about why this is needed.
What do we already know about the community and the issues?	Desk research on existing reports both locally and nationally about the issues and any stats or information about the community.
How can we be open to the unknown and unexpected?	Creating the conditions for the results to emerge as the process unfolds, e.g. trusting the community, trusting the time it takes, choosing good methods.
What groups and individuals need to be involved?	See 'Identifying and Mapping Stakeholders' resource (page 12).
What is the budget for the process?	Agreeing budget internally and sourcing extra funding if required.
How can we get people involved from the outset?	Begin conversations early on - before things are in motion. Identify key stakeholders early in the process.
Is there sufficient time for meaningful consultation?	See 'Steps for Effective Consultation' (page 8) for recommended timeframes for each stage. Keep flexibility at the end for any further work or tying up that may be needed.

World Café



Size of Group	Time	Space Required
Can accommodate large groups, anywhere from 15 up to 50 people or more	1 – 3 hours	Large Space with small tables for people to break into smaller groups

Aim:

To host a large group conversation around three key questions in a relaxed and informal setting that values everyone's participation.

Materials needed:

Flip chart paper and markers – or paper tablecloths that people can write on, coloured pens, pencils, markers.

Steps:

1

In setting up a World Café, preparation is key. There is a good guide for what you should think about online (see <http://www.theworldcafe.com>), including how to ask the right questions, setting the invitation and how to capture what comes up.

2

It is important to create a space that is interesting and which makes people feel welcomed and safe (e.g. flowers on the tables, creative venue, use of colour, etc.) – like a real café!

3

The method usually begins with 20 minutes for people to introduce themselves to one another, which can include the reasons why they came along. There should be a minimum of 4 – 5 people at each table.

4

This is followed by three rounds of conversation, allowing 20-45 minutes per round (the first round can be longer). After each round, the participants move to a different table and the table host updates them of the previous conversation. After the final conversation, the table host summarises the main points from the discussions. Following this, the facilitator can share the emerging insights and discoveries, leading to identification of possible actions.



“

I find the world café style meetings very good as there is no hierarchy in the room – all views are equal. And the real stuff happens when you hear others and they hear you. Moving to other tables is also important so you get to hear/participate in at least three ‘tables’.

”

– Respondent (2018)

Appreciative Inquiry



Size of Group	Time	Space Required
Suitable for smaller groups e.g. 5 – 20 people	1 hour	Workshop room suitable for the size of group

Aim:

Appreciative Inquiry is a strengths-based way to 'inquire' into an issue, an organisation or a community. It is different from typical evaluation-style methods as it focuses on what is positive, what is working well about a place, community, issue or organisation.

Appreciative Inquiry is an effective method when looking to create, promote or investigate positive and sustainable change within a community. The methodology can bring a lot of good energy and spark off innovative ideas and solutions by members of the community, based on what is already working well within that community.

Materials needed:

Appreciative Inquiry questions, possibly on worksheets. Paper and resources for ideas and action to emerge.

Steps:

Here are the basic foundations of the Appreciative Inquiry method. How you choose to use these could differ depending on the group and the time available. It can be a mixture of individual and group work. You can use walking and talking as part of it. You can bring art and creativity into it. You can apply it for one session or the method can be applied over a number of sessions. We are sharing the foundations so that you can build your methodology around this.

1

Discover:

Discover positive moments and experiences and identify strengths and capabilities. This can be done individually at first then shared;

2

Dream:

Dream imaginatively and collectively envision what else is possible;

3

Design:

Design - co-create what can be done to build capacity (practically) and what should be done (morally);

4

Destiny:

Destiny - commit to learning, innovation, and delivering results that everyone cares about and is invested in.



Citizen's Jury



Size of Group	Time	Space Required
Large groups & invite wider community to participate	1 – 2 hours	Large Hall

Aim:

The Citizen's Jury is a way of getting people's input into policy decisions, to create a mock court room to debate and decide upon an issue. It works best if there is one clear issue to debate (e.g. community energy needs).

Materials needed:

A space and people to make up the jury and witnesses, as well as an audience.

Steps:

1

The jury consists of 12-24 randomly selected citizens. 'Witnesses' are people with particular expertise who offer a range of perspectives on the issues.

2

The jurors then discuss the different perspectives and reach a decision on the action to be taken.

3

The sponsoring body is required to respond either by acting on the decision or by explaining why it disagrees with it.

Consultation Picnics



Size of Group	Time	Space Required
No particular limit to number of people you can engage	Anywhere from 1 hour to all day	A prominent public space where there is a good footfall of people, ideally with something eye catching that will draw people over.

Aim:

To use a public space to capture the views and comments of large groups of people in an informal setting. The methodology targets passersby who are approached to join the picnic and to give their opinion.

Materials needed:

Picnic blankets and food, graffiti wall (a space for people to doodle, draw, comment - usually hosted on a wall) or some display format that can easily capture people's opinions in a quick and accessible way.

Steps:

1

Set up the picnic to be attractive – and noticeable! You will need to have a set question that you are looking to consult on, and preferably many hands-on-deck to help facilitate the engagement with the public.

2

Once you have the question clearly displayed and anyone helping out has been properly briefed, you can approach passersby and invite them to offer their views, opinions or new ideas on the consultation topic.

3

One of the most beneficial aspects of Consultation Picnics is that they can reach people who may not normally participate.

Community Mapping



Size of Group	Time	Space Required
Small groups, e.g. 5 – 20 people	1 – 2 hours	Workshop room

Aim:

Community Mapping is a way to engage people in making comments on how they feel about issues within their local area, using maps and photographs of the area, leading to joint planning.

Community mapping can be a useful tool when looking at disused spaces, community assets or facilities. A real sense of community ownership can be generated and new ideas can emerge through good discussions. However, not all ideas will be able to be acted upon which can sometimes lead to unrealistic expectations.

Steps:

This method would suit a smaller group of people and can generate good discussion, new ideas and a renewed sense of place. The same process could be done with different groups, potentially with different outcomes.

1 Individuals or groups are invited to create physical maps of their area or town using pen and paper, lines in the sand, cloth, chalk or other materials to hand.

2 A framework or theme is provided to focus people's thoughts, for example places you visit frequently, landmarks, boundaries, places you dislike, things you would like to see. The maps are discussed and analysed to understand differing viewpoints and planning of what should be done.

3 This process usually leads to ideas being generated through smaller group discussions and recorded on post-its. Records of maps and debates are kept for future reference.

Materials needed:

Maps, photographs of the local area. Post-its, pens, coloured pencils and paper to capture ideas to be generated.



Sample Submission Template

Title Here

A few sentences to explain the purpose of the wider consultation, who is hosting the consultation, purpose of this invitation for submissions, any information on what is already known about the issue (this could take the form of a paper that has been prepared – possibly a further link to access this paper).

- What do you see as the major gaps on (x) issue in your area?

- Do you have any examples of this from the community?

- What are the main barriers to tackling this issue in your area?

- What steps should be taken to address these gaps?

- What are the wider issues (e.g. beyond your community) that might impact on (x issue)?

- Do you have ideas for what could be done at community or national level to address these wider issues?

- Are there groups in your community we should talk with to learn more about this issue, and what needs to be done?

- Are you writing as an individual or are you representing a group in this submission?

Name (optional): _____

Email address (optional): _____

Group name (if relevant): _____

Sample Survey

Title Here

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Carlow PPN is developing a consultation toolkit that will draw on your experience and ideas on consultation.

Please return the completed survey to Gráinne O'Neill, Carlow PPN, Town Hall, Carlow or email carlowppn@carlowcoco.ie.

1. Are you based in a town or a rural setting

☐

Town

☐

Rural

2. Which of the following best describes your role in the community

☐

Community / Voluntary Organisation

☐

Statutory Body

☐

Business/ Enterprise

☐

Individual

☐

Other (Please specify) _____

3. What level of consultation have you participated in previously?

☐

Local Community

☐

National

☐

County wide

☐

None

☐

Regional

☐

Other (Please specify) _____

4. How satisfied were you with your opportunity to engage?

☐

Satisfied

☐

Quite Satisfied

☐

Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied

☐

Quite Dissatisfied

☐

Dissatisfied

5. Overall, for you, what three things would make for a great consultation process?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Next Steps



For more resources and methods to use, check out the following links:

List of consultation methods

www.communityplanning.net/methods/methods_a-z.php

Ideas for who to involve in your consultation

www.communityplanning.net/useful/docs/who_to_involve.pdf

ACMA's Guide to Making a Submission' www.acma.gov.au

NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency) www.nala.ie

Some other useful toolkits and tools:

The Wheel's GDPR Toolkit www.wheel.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2018-08/GDPR_Guide_2017_Web_Edition_0.pdf

lx.iriss.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/sbf-easy-consultation-toolkit.pdf

www.toolkit.creativityni.org

www.theworldcafe.com

www.surveymonkey.com

www.smartsurvey.co.uk

www.leapfrog.tools

Here is a list of community and other stakeholders you may want to consider making a particular effort of inviting to attend your consultation events:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🍃 Older people's groups 🍃 People with disabilities 🍃 LGBTI groups 🍃 Family resource centres 🍃 Community groups 🍃 Traveller support groups 🍃 New/Migrant communities 🍃 Environmental groups 🍃 Parents groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🍃 Residents groups 🍃 Womens groups 🍃 Mental health advocates 🍃 Rural communities 🍃 Unemployed people 🍃 Young people in formal education or youth work 🍃 Other communities you identify at the planning stage |
|---|--|

Acknowledgements:

The following Focus Group Meetings took place:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🍃 Carlow Town 🍃 Bagenalstown 🍃 Tullow 🍃 Traveller Community Workers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🍃 Comhairle Na nÓg 🍃 New Communities 🍃 County Council Management and Local Elected Members |
|--|--|

Carlow PPN appreciates all the individuals and groups that voluntarily gave their time to the public meetings, focus group sessions and plenary events.



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