The Policy Project

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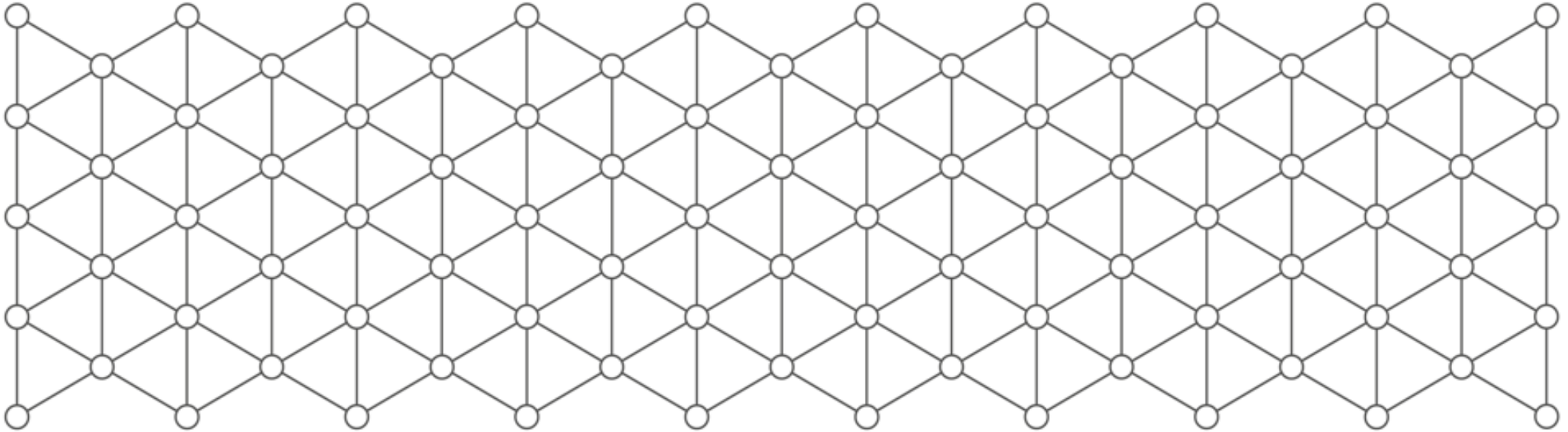
The Policy Project Community Engagement resources

Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement

A guide for policy advisors on good community engagement practice, including at each level of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



New Zealand Government

A suite of resources supporting Community Engagement

The **Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement** is one of six new community engagement resources for policy advisors and government agencies within the Policy Project's Policy Methods Toolbox. These were developed by the Policy Project to fulfil Commitment 5 of the Open Government Partnership 2018 – 2021 National Action Plan. Commitment 5 aims to assist the New Zealand public sector to develop a deeper and more consistent understanding of what good engagement with the public means (right across the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation).

The six new community engagement resources are:

1. **Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement** – A guide for policy advisors on good community engagement practice, including at each level of the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.
2. **Principles and Values for Community Engagement** – A guide for government agencies and policy advisors on principles and values for good community engagement in policy making.
3. **Getting Ready for Community Engagement** – A guide for government agencies on building capability and readiness for community engagement.
4. **Community Engagement Design Tool** – A tool to help policy advisors identify the level on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation most appropriate for a specific policy project.
5. **Selecting Methods for Community Engagement** – Resources to help policy advisors choose the right engagement methods to support good engagement planning.
6. **Guide to Inclusive Community Engagement** – A guide for government agencies and policy advisors on inclusive community engagement in policy making.

Table of contents

1. Introduction....4
2. What constitutes good community engagement practice?....8
3. Good practice requirements at each IAP2 Spectrum level....12
4. Good practice includes assessing and evaluating our practice....19
5. Conclusion....21

Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions....22

Appendix B – Community engagement debrief process....23

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this guide

This guide provides policy advisors with advice on what constitutes good practice community engagement in government policy making. That includes what good practice looks like when engaging at each level of the internationally recognised framework, the Spectrum of Public Participation (Spectrum).

This Good Practice Guide for Community Engagement is a companion resource to five other resources for policy advisors on different facets of community engagement. These are outlined above on page 2, and can be found on the Community engagement page of the Policy Project's Policy Methods Toolbox.

This Good Practice Guide to Community Engagement is divided into three sections that focus on:

- what constitutes good community engagement practice – and support to achieve this
- critical good practice requirements when engaging at each level of the IAP2 Spectrum
- improving the contribution your community engagement makes to policy advice over time, through assessing and evaluating the engagement experience.

1.2 Placing people at the heart of policy making

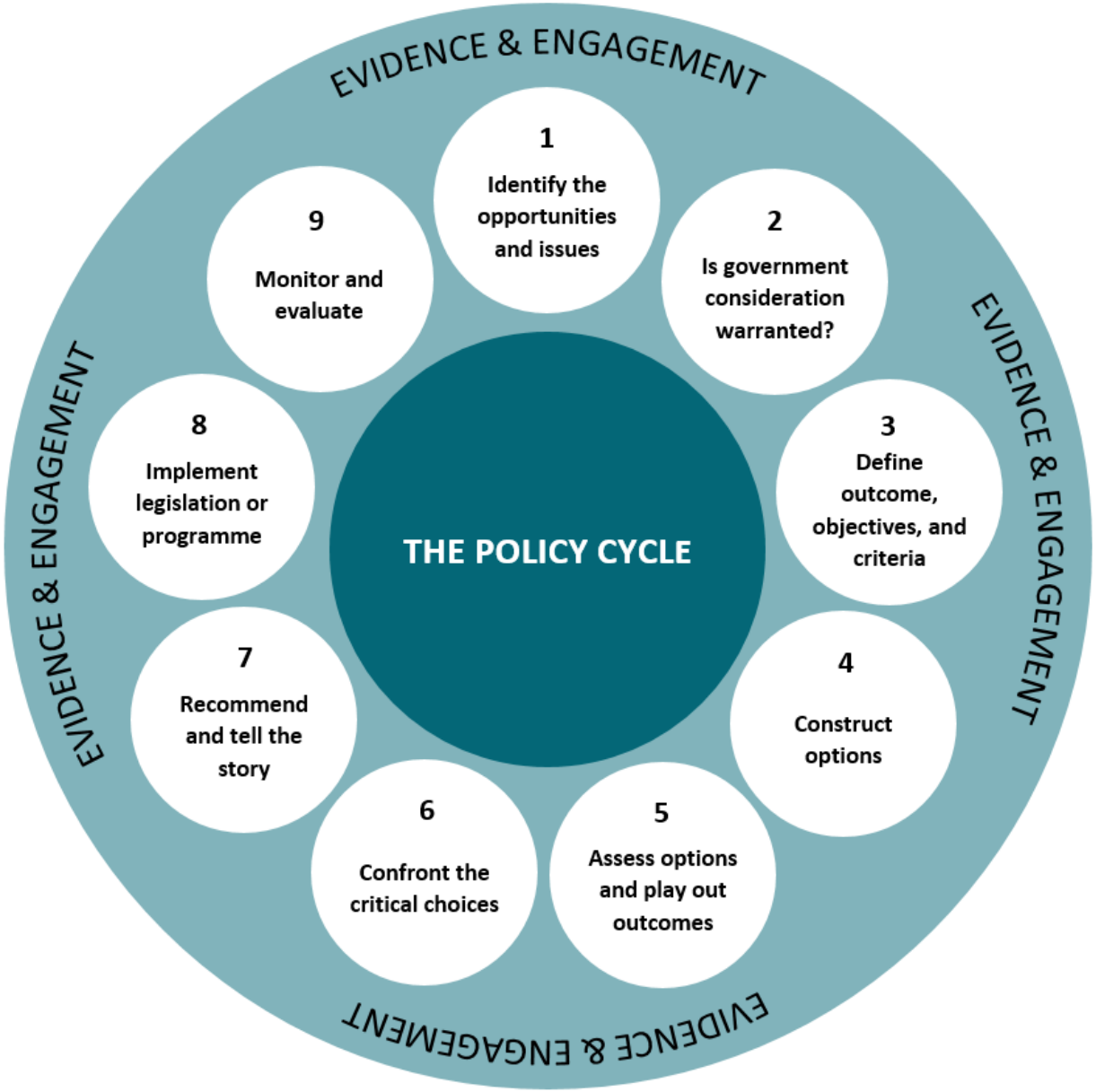
For government policies to be human-centred and cater for the needs of our communities, people should be at the heart of what we do. Their motivations and perceptions, choices and experiences need to be brought more into policy thinking and the policy process.[1]

Integrating effective community engagement throughout the policy process requires a change of policy-making culture and philosophy or mindset.

Whether we are initiating a high-level strategic policy exercise or are about to work on a much narrower problem, the opportunity to engage in a variety of ways exists at every point in the policy cycle. The basic policy-making cycle is set out below in Figure 1. The opportunities to engage very much depend on the nature of the issue or opportunity. While it's not always appropriate or possible to take a collaborative engagement approach, there are many innovative ways to engage with the community at all stages of policy development.

[1] Policy by Design – exploring the intersection of design and policy in Aotearoa New Zealand: 7 Case Studies: www.aucklandco-lab.nz/reports

Figure 1. The Policy Cycle[2]



[2] This version of the policy cycle is based on the Ministry of the Environment's formerly used COBRA Policy Cycle.

1.3 Create opportunities to engage with the community during policy making

In the past, traditional engagement practice has often involved government agencies working fairly separately from communities – to define issues, describe policy objectives, and identify and preliminarily assess options to achieve them. Consulting and informing those affected has often taken place when policy proposals are in late stages of development.

In the past, In recent years there have been a range of initiatives where government agencies have taken a much more innovative and collaborative approach to policy making and community engagement practice – as the following examples illustrate.

Pā to Policy, Policy to Pā whānau-centred approach

The whānau-centred approach to engagement and delivery of outcomes for Māori communities gives whānau the rangatiratanga or autonomy to drive solutions. Te Puni Kōkiri's Pā to Policy, Policy to Pā whānau-centred approach aims to establish real time end-to-end intelligence from whānau, giving policy advisors a deeper and more up-to-date perspective of issues for Māori.

Te Puni Kōkiri combines its regional network's engagement with Māori communities with its policy and delivery functions. Initial policy concepts are shaped using insights about the reality of people's lives. Te Puni Kōkiri also co-designs initiatives with whānau to meet their needs, then monitors and evaluates success to learn and apply these lessons in future projects.

The Digital Identity Programme

The Digital Identity Programme works with citizens, government, and the private sector to ensure citizens have control over what happens to their personal information. Outcomes sought from extensive engagement include finding out what innovative services the emerging private sector marketplace can offer. The Department of Internal Affairs worked with individuals and organisations to design experiments to test the feasibility of new solutions to known digital identity problems. As part of the engagement process the Department collaborated with stakeholders to identify a problem or opportunity that everyone could agree on. Hypotheses based on specific personas were used. The Department conducted experiments designed to prove or disprove assumptions with the participation of interested parties – also see the the Digital Identity case study.

The Healthy Homes Initiative

The Healthy Homes initiative is profiled in the Auckland Co-design Lab case study Learning in Complex Settings. The initiative involved central and local government engaging with families, whānau, frontline workers, community organisations and providers of services to learn by doing – testing and experimenting to better understand people's lived experience of unhealthy homes and how to improve living standards. The team worked on the ground to identify the range of implementation and policy issues. After key issues were agreed everyone involved worked together to explore potential responses. A refined set was prototyped with providers, landlords and families in their homes. This approach created the space for more collaborative, innovative and systemic responses and allowed resources to be used in different and non-traditional ways.

As these examples illustrate, it's possible to create opportunities for innovative community engagement that transform the policy-making process. These examples involve a shift in mindset about the role of policy advisors and other participants in engagement and policy making. They've reframed the 'how' of policy work from a traditional 'doing for or to' people in the community to 'doing with' them. These examples show a change from focusing on 'how can we solve their problem', to 'how can we find out what this means for the people experiencing it'. They demonstrate how can we identify and test opportunities for change together, so we know they really work. To varying degrees, these policy advisors used engagement and collaborative processes to do the heavy lifting of policy making, from early in the life of each policy project to the end.

2. What constitutes good community engagement practice?

2.1 Apply a principled approach to engagement relationships and practice

Taking a principled approach to how we engage supports good relationships, builds trust with communities and is the foundation of good engagement practice. Relationships with communities should be built on respect, trust and reciprocity. Whether developing new policies or implementing them – whether a formal hui or someone seeking support – the following eight core principles and concepts should guide our approach to engagement:

1. A commitment to strengthening and deepening the Māori Crown relationship.
2. Engagement can be led by anyone.
3. Engaging early in the policy process.
4. Open and transparent engagement.
5. Genuine and meaningful engagement.
6. Engaging throughout the policy process.
7. Being responsive and flexible.
8. Community engagement isn't one size fits all.

More detail on the nature of these principles can be found in Principles and Values for Community Engagement.

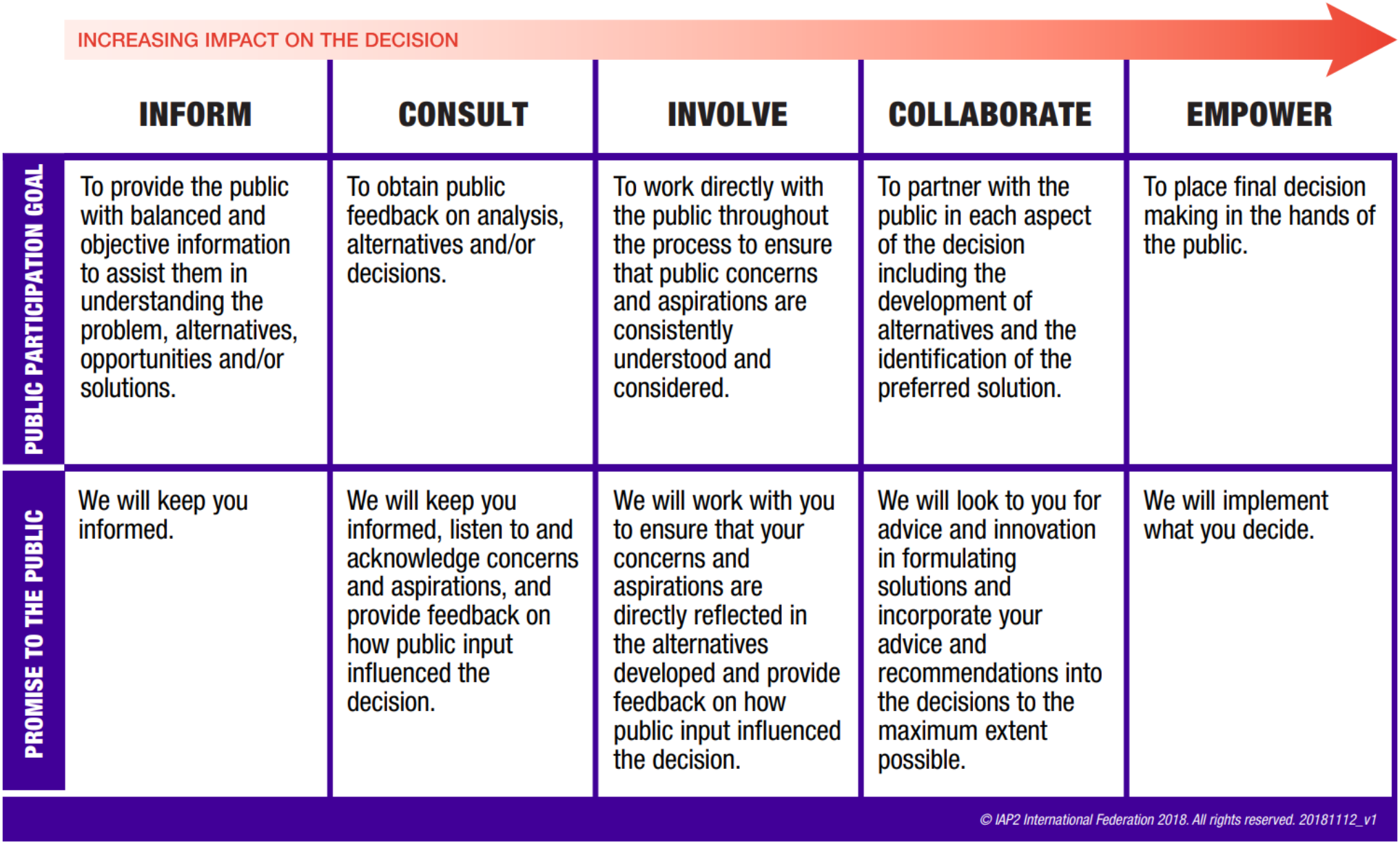
2.2 Begin with good engagement design – by using the IAP2 engagement framework to identify your approach to the level of influence

Start by building time for the work of engagement design and planning into your project management. Think strategically about the engagement design – and what broad approach to recommend and implement for your specific policy project, from amongst those available. Internationally, the most widely recognised framework for describing broad approaches to community engagement is the 'Spectrum of Public Participation' (the Spectrum) produced by the International Association of Public Participation[3] – shown in Figure 2 on the next page.

The five levels in the Spectrum are Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower. Each level differs in terms of the public participation goals and the degree of influence people and communities will have on shaping the response to a problem or opportunity, and on making decisions. This framework can guide us in thinking about the choices we make about how we involve communities in policy making through engagement.

[3] www.iap2.org.au/resources/spectrum

Figure 2: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



You can determine the best approach to engagement on this Spectrum by identifying the community engagement design that best matches the policy question and project under development. The Community Engagement Design Tool helps you consider the key factors to determine the best community engagement approach, namely:

- **Context** – for policy making supported by engagement.
- **Scope** – of the problem or opportunity.
- **People** – individuals and groups affected.
- **Purpose** – of engagement.

Carefully considering these factors enables policy advisors to determine what to recommend regarding where on the IAP2 Spectrum (of community influence on decisions) a specific policy project should operate – in terms of the degree of community influence on decisions. Once agreed, this choice of community engagement approach during the design phase, provides a sound basis for detailed engagement planning and delivery.

The significant differences in the promise of influence made at each level of the IAP2 Spectrum mean that in a number of ways, what good engagement practice means differs from level to level. Section 3 outlines what good engagement practice means when the broad engagement approach is Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, or Empower.

Once you've determined the best engagement design to match your policy project, you're in a good position to start planning your engagement events. Appendix A contains a list of Frequently Asked Questions as a starting point to think about the next steps as you begin to prepare your engagement plan.

2.3 Community engagement should be inclusive and embrace diversity

It's important to create community engagement opportunities that reflect a true cross-section of New Zealand society affected by and interested in a policy matter. It will enable policies that better reflect who we are and create change that's likely to endure. It's important to work with communities to understand any barriers to participation. Their perspectives on how any engagement process should be designed, planned and managed also need to be taken into account.

The Guide to Inclusive Community Engagement provides:

- guidance for government policy agencies on how to create organisational readiness for inclusive engagement
- guidance for policy practitioners on how to design, plan and manage engagement that ensures policy development reflects the rich diversity of community views.

2.4 Choose methods that reflect expectations and engagement design

It's important to choose the right engagement methods for your policy project. You may use a number of methods over the course of the project. In some cases, each stage may lend itself to a different engagement approach, or different engagement approaches may be appropriate for different groups. Once you've designed your engagement and are looking to plan an inclusive approach you can refer to the resource for Selecting Methods for Community Engagement. This resource allows you to consider the different aspects of your project, including your design approach and the level of influence selected. It guides you to the relevant methods that best suit the circumstances.

2.5 Agencies' readiness for community engagement

Leadership and organisational support is required to integrate effective community engagement into policy practice. Feedback received during development of these resources pointed to the following enablers:

- a mandate from senior leaders to change the way we engage (engaging early to test assumptions, longer policy timeframes, changes in power sharing, support for cross government engagement)
- resourcing to enable capacity to engage (including using secondments to mitigate resource constraints)
- capability in community engagement (people with the right skills and experience)
- systems that support the processes that underpin community engagement.

Investing in community engagement leadership, strengthening organisational capability and engagement support systems can have wide benefits. You can read more about the benefits to agencies in the Getting Ready for Community Engagement guide. This also outlines in more detail what agencies can do to ensure their organisation is well placed to support good engagement practice in its policy work programme.

2.6 Individual skills and characteristics of good engagement practitioners

Developing professional as well as interpersonal skills for carrying out engagement can take time and a lot of learning by doing. One of the most important skills for a policy advisor carrying out community engagement is the ability to listen effectively and genuinely. When you seek and collate information it's also important to be aware of your own bias. That is, your framing of issues and solutions can influence how those being engaged with will respond. How you interpret peoples' responses may not be bias-free either. Both can adversely impact on the output of engagement, the value of its contribution to policy making, and how the people you engaged with feel about the experience.

A good practice can be to check what you think you've heard, then restate or reflect the results of your engagement back to those you're engaging with. Exposure to more engagement opportunities will help you test any unconscious bias, and check on any filters you may be applying when considering participants' input.

The Policy Skills Framework allows you to assess your skill level as a policy practitioner at the developing, practising and expert leading levels so you can build on your own engagement and collaboration skills.

The Māori Crown Relations Capability Framework developed by Te Arawhiti, the Office of Māori Crown Relations, has an Individual Capability Component which details six focus areas and five specialist competencies to support public servants to develop their Māori Crown relations capability. It also includes an Organisational Capability Component to assist agencies to strengthen six areas for building Māori-related organisational capability. These include: Governance, Relationships with Māori, structural considerations, workforce capability, environment, and policy and service delivery.

3. Good practice at each IAP2 Spectrum level

As noted earlier, good practice engagement and the methods you may use vary significantly between different levels of the IAP2 Spectrum. As a policy advisor your contribution and role during the engagement process also varies according to the Spectrum level – you can be a designer, a developer, facilitator or a participant.

Understanding what good practice means at each Spectrum level will help you to broaden and deepen your community engagement practice. Over time, this enables you to more confidently experiment with different approaches in different circumstances.

The profiles on the following pages set out good practice for the Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower levels.

3.1 Good practice engagement when informing communities

Spectrum level	Inform
Influence promise	The commitment at the Inform level is to keep people informed.
Method types	Methods that provide accessible, balanced, objective, accurate information so that the public can understand the issue being considered, how it may affect them and how they can participate in the community engagement on the issue under consideration. Method examples include: • providing information on websites • paid advertising • articles • blogs/social media comments • discussion documents • media stories • pamphlets • posters • webinars.
Policy advisor contribution	The policy advisor's role is to identify and gather the information that the community needs, and then develop the content appropriate to the methods chosen for conveying the information.
Good practice	Best practice at the Inform level is to ensure that the communication is clear, simple, accessible and matches the needs of the target groups for community engagement. The purpose of the communication may include: • sharing information that aids understanding of the issue under consideration and the problem to be solved • explaining how people can participate in the engagement activity • promoting participation • providing feedback on the contributions received from the public and stakeholders and decision made. Look to use a range of communication channels to reach the target communities for engagement. Good practice in communication is to ensure that the information provided is: • in an accessible easy to read language • translated appropriately to be accessible to the diversity of people in New Zealand • accessible, in a document presentation, for people with visual disabilities • provided in a range of lengths and platforms – highlighting in depth, critical issues designed for people with different time and interest • including strong visual elements to communicate key concepts which are used consistently

Spectrum level	Inform
	throughout the following mediums: – advertising – apps – community networks – direct communication – media – personal contact – social media – website.

3.2 Good practice engagement when consulting communities

Spectrum level	Consult
Influence promise	The commitment at the Consult level is to keep people informed, listen to their feedback, acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on what was said and how the input has affected decision making.
Method types	Methods that provide an opportunity for participants to provide feedback on a proposal or contribute to the understanding of the problem and opportunity, in person, online or in writing. Method examples include: • surveys • focus groups • public meetings • crowd sourcing • community education programmes • advisory groups • online interactive information loading • open house • photo sharing.
Policy advisor contribution	The policy advisor's role is to design the engagement questions that will support the policy process, and design and implement the range of methods for people to be able to provide feedback, comment and information (supported by engagement specialists where available).

Spectrum level	Consult
Good practice	Best consultation practice at Consult level is aimed at ensuring a broad range of perspectives are gathered to inform the policy thinking. The focus is for participants to give feedback and provide their views and share their experiences. To achieve this, make the consultation questions available on a range of platforms and channels – face to face, online survey and in writing – to encourage participation. A general tip is to provide opportunities to contribute to feedback in a range of ways, times or places which are where people already visit or gather. For example, online surveys, markets or Saturday sport pop up opportunities, community and stakeholder networks, community or industry displays and feedback opportunities. Test the engagement questions you design with people in the target group – to ensure that they're accessible and generate the information you're looking for. Time is always a challenge for engagement participants so ensure Consult level questions and activities don't require too much effort. Lengthier consultation documents can be good for target groups who are most impacted by or who have an existing interest in the policy issue, but not so useful to those less familiar with the issues at hand. Therefore, it's important to create a range of resources that provide key information in shorter and more accessible forms.

Spectrum level	Consult
	Good practice when hosting any face-to-face meetings is that: • the welcome to the meeting should reflect the place and the identity of the people attending • the venues should be accessible • as part of the hosting, drinks and food provided should recognise the range of health needs and food preferences that exist.

3.3 Good practice engagement when involving communities

Spectrum level	Involve
Influence promise	The commitment at the Involve level is to work directly with people to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Method types	Methods that provide an opportunity for policy advisors to work directly with engagement participants to provide feedback. This may be on a proposal or may contribute to the understanding of the problem and opportunity and allow problem solve together. Method examples include: • advisory groups • citizens panel • co-design • deliberative forums • participatory editing • workshops • world café.
Policy advisor contribution	The policy advisor's role is to design questions and processes to focus conversation on the key issues under consideration. This maximises the opportunity for participants to contribute and discuss the issues and build solutions (supported by engagement specialists where available).
Spectrum level	**Involve**
	The opportunity for the policy advisor is to be in conversation and development directly with stakeholders, and community members. Good engagement practice in these situations is to aim to facilitate and be welcoming, to be curious in conversations rather than being defensive about the policy proposal or dominating conversations.
Good practice	At the Involve level the critical elements of good community engagement practice are: • a clear statement of the surface presentation of the problem to be solved • clarity about the role of participants in understanding the causes and impacts of the problem • clarity about the role of the participants in designing solutions and in decision making • developing a process design of the conversation, problem solving or development activities • skilled facilitation of the process, that's separated from the content presentation role • provision of quality, easy to access and use information • good support for participation. **Clear problem definition and decision-making roles** One of the features of methods at the Involve level is that participants are asked to contribute more time and effort into problem-solving the particular policy question.

Spectrum level	Involve
	This makes it reasonable for participants to think that their contribution will be more influential on the final decision. It's important to be clear about how their contribution will be used and about the decision-making process. **Process design and facilitation** Process design and facilitation should maximise the participation and contribution of stakeholders and public to the policy problem-solving. The facilitator should be also able to skilfully manage any disagreement and conflict if it arises. **Supporting participation** The Involve level often requires a little more time and effort to enable participants to contribute effectively. Good community engagement practice is to act as a good host of the conversations and participation. For face-to-face gatherings, that includes: • providing some refreshments for participants • ideally choosing facilities that support children to be welcomed • ensuring that the venue is accessible and easy to get to for likely participants. For the processes that take more time commitment (e.g. advisory groups, deliberative forum, co-design) it's important to consider options to recompense people for their time. For example, the recognition may be money, koha or vouchers to reduce travel costs or paying for travel.

3.4 Good practice engagement when collaborating with communities

Spectrum level	Collaborate
Influence promise	The commitment at the Collaborate level is to share problem solving, opportunity-taking and decision making with Māori, stakeholders or individuals.
Method types	Methods that provide an opportunity for community and stakeholder representatives, working with policy advisors, their managers and decision makers to share responsibility for problem solving, option development and decision making. Method examples include: • citizens jury • co-governance • deliberative forum/polling • Delphi process • participatory budgeting/editing • summits.
Policy advisor contribution	The significance of the Collaborate level is the commitment to share decision making. Internal readiness to be part of the shared decision-making process and dynamic requires good internal engagement from policy advisors to policy managers and senior decision makers in the agency. The specific nature of policy advisor input will vary considerably, depending on which methods of collaborative community engagement are chosen.

Spectrum level	Collaborate
	Whichever is selected, there will be considerable effort involved in: establishing the collaborative vehicle – including selecting who from the community will be involved; collecting and presenting the information needed; developing the tools, systems and or processes needed to support the method chosen, and linking the collaborative process with more usual government decision processes.
Good practice	The critical difference between this Collaborate level and the Involve and Empower levels is that decision making is shared. At the Involve level, decision making sits with the organisation or minister and at the Empower level the decision making sits with the public, stakeholder, Māori organisation or community. At the Collaborate level, the opportunity is to work with key partners and stakeholders in a way that has all parties sharing the 'decision maker's dilemma'. This involves agreeing on issues and desired outcomes, while factoring in constraints and the consequences of the potential solution. Good community engagement practice at the Collaborate level requires: • commitment from the senior levels of the government agency or minister to a collaborative process • clarity about any limits on potential solutions or any requirements of potential solutions • clarity about the roles and responsibility of the collaborative group

Spectrum level	Collaborate
	• investment early in the process to build a shared commitment to the role and responsibilities of the group • agreement to terms of reference including clarity about leadership, information sharing, meeting process and decision making • good relationship skills to build and sustain those relationships • process support to enable good decision making through information provision, facilitation, and reporting • participation support including recognition and recompense for the costs of participation – time, travel and any supporting activities.

3.5 Good practice engagement when empowering communities

Spectrum level	Collaborate
Influence promise	The commitment at the Empower level is to let the public, a community or a group make a decision, and then ensure their decision is implemented.
Method types	Methods that empower and enable stakeholders, communities and decision makers to take responsibility for problem solving, option taking and decision making. Method examples include: • participatory budgeting/editing • voting • referendum • allocating responsibilities to non-government entities.
Policy advisor contribution	The key role for policy advisors is to shape the questions or activities that will be the decision of the public. The design of questions or activities will also require policy advisors to provide advice on the resourcing and implications of the potential decisions that could be made.
Good practice	When working at the Empower level, it's critical to be committed to enabling the decision that will be made, and to be clear on how the decision making and implementation will be supported. Empowerment can be through referendum, allocating responsibility for the decision or implementation to a specific group, or voting. Talking with representatives to thoroughly scope the support required for successful empowerment is essential to this working well.

4. Assessing and evaluating our community engagement practice

Community engagement practice can and should be evaluated and assessed. This supports continuous learning that ultimately enables good practice. It's therefore important that policy advisors set specific goals and objectives for effective community engagement for their project. These goals and objectives can then be used as a basis for measuring success. A good time to set these is when you decide on the engagement purpose and method for achieving it. The Community Engagement Design Tool details how to go about establishing your engagement purpose and goals.

One way to assess whether your goals have been met is to develop criteria to help measure what was achieved. You should include an opportunity for participants to give feedback on their experience. This will enable you to assess and report on the effectiveness of community engagement, methods and activities against those criteria. To support the evaluation exercise, it's also important to record participation levels and the profile of participants.

There are three types of criteria – outcome, acceptance and process – which you can draw on to design how to evaluate and review your engagement process. These are set out below. The criteria are based on assessing the outcomes and what was achieved, how well the public accepted the engagement process, and how well the engagement method and process was designed and implemented. Two of the criteria (the Acceptance and Process criteria) are based on the work by Rowe and Frewer (2004).[4]

4.1 Outcomes criteria – to assess what was achieved

Use the following Outcomes Criteria to assess what was achieved:

- **Quality of decision**
  The insights gained from engagement resulted in better informed decisions that were more likely to achieve policy outcomes.
- **Sustainability**
  The decision was implementable, sustainable and enduring.
- **Relationships**
  The process supported positive relationships and acknowledged conflicts and worked through any conflict in a constructive manner.
- **Valued**
  Participants felt their contribution was valued.

[4] Gene Rowe, Lynn J Frewer, Public Participation Methods: A Framework for Evaluation, January 2004, www.researchgate.net/publication/228305536_Public_Participation_Methods_A_Framework_for_Evaluation

4.2 Acceptance Criteria – to assess factors that influence public acceptance of the engagement process

Use the following Acceptance Criteria to assess how well the public and stakeholders accepted the process:

- **Representative**
  The participants were a representative sample of the affected or interested public.
- **Independence**
  The participants found the process to be independent and unbiased.
- **Early involvement**
  The public was involved early in the policy process.
- **Influence**
  The feedback or input impacted on the decision.

4.3 Process Criteria – to assess design and implementation of engagement

Use the following Process Criteria to determine how well the engagement methods and process for the project were designed and implemented:

- **Process**
  Engagement was adequately scoped, planned and delivered in adherence to the Community Engagement principles; IAP2 Core Values or Quality Assurance Standard.
- **Resource allocation**
  Participants had the necessary information, material, and time.
- **Task definition**
  Participants were clear about the task, the scope, and the output of the method.
- **Structured decision making**
  An appropriate process for decision making was used and communicated clearly so participants understood how and why a decision was made.
- **Cost-effective**
  The method produced valuable data compared to the cost of collection.

4.4 Good practice to carry out a debrief process following engagement

At the end of each engagement element of a policy project a debrief process is good community engagement practice. This provides an opportunity to review community engagement experience and activity against plans and expectations. These conversations are most effective if you include the key people who were involved in the engagement element of the project.

The purpose of the community engagement debrief process is to evaluate the engagement process by:

- creating a summary of the engagement activities
- engaging the team in assessing the engagement high points and development points.

Appendix B contains typical debrief questions and outlines the types of feedback you should seek, and then outlines how you'd collect information to answer them.

The questions are based on an assessment of the engagement activity carried out and the overall experience and analysis of the processes used. It helps to create a summary of lessons learned.

5. Conclusion

Good practice engagement starts with applying a principled approach to every element of how we engage. This applies whether we are informing communities or collaborating with them – or adopting some other promise of influence.

Policy advisors can source expertise of those with experience, whether from inside or outside government, to help inform their engagement approach. You can use well-considered design as a basis for planning and delivering your engagement.

Where possible, ensure you hear from or work with a diverse range of voices and involve those impacted and affected by any change in policy. Agencies that support good engagement practice and match it with the right systems and organisational capability will be rewarded with richer insights. They'll achieve workable and more innovative solutions that endure, and better ongoing relationships with communities.

Good engagement practice helps people feel heard and respected, as we work with them to get policy decisions made that meet their needs.

Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
How much time should I allow for community engagement?	It depends – the engagement purpose and the target groups for engagement, and the overall timeline you may have been given for your project by ministers or senior leaders. However, from advertising the opportunity to participation, to getting the public to contribute via online or face-to-face methods will take approximately 6 to 10 weeks. Collaborative processes take more time to build relationships and understand one another, as a strong basis for problem solving and action planning. This is only a guide and specific planning that checks the availability of target groups, and the time they have to contribute will help identify the length of time required for community engagement on a specific policy issue.
When should we plan engagement?	If possible, plan the engagement approach alongside the planning of the policy activities. Build relationships with key partners and stakeholders and communities early in the life of your project to collect specific information about how best to engage people.
Do we have to use only face to face methods?	No, the right method type is something that will depend on the particular policy question and the people to be engaged. When engaging the public, it would be unusual not to provide an online participation option in addition to face-to-face options.
Where and when should we run workshops?	As a general approach, meetings and methods should be run as close as possible to the people you're seeking to engage, at a time to match their availability. Talking with community or stakeholder representatives in your planning will help you identify existing events of places and times that match the target group availability.
How do I get my manager to agree to engagement as part of the policy project?	As part of your policy project planning process incorporate community engagement planning. A key part of the engagement design is to identify the engagement purpose. This element is key to being able to communicate the value of the engagement to creating quality policy. Use this analysis as a basis for talking with your manager about the value of engagement to the policy project and future implementation of the policy.

Appendix B – Community engagement debrief process

You can use the typical debrief questions set out below as an agenda for any debrief process you might carry out. Each line of questioning sets out the types of feedback being sought and aims to help you create a summary. of lessons learned. The questions are based on an assessment of the engagement activity carried out, the overall experience and analysis of the processes used.

Activity map

1. What did we do?
    - The aim of this question is to map the timeline of the engagement activities. This timeline forms a recording platform for the second set of questions.

2. What participation levels did we generate?
    - Numbers and nature of participation mapped across the target groups for participation and the timeline.

3. What results did we create from the engagement?
    - Information gathered, advice or suggestions for policy proposal creation or improvement, relationships developed or enhanced.

Experience

4. What were the elements or activities we enjoyed most or were most challenging?
    - Mapped across the activities of the project timeline.

Analysis

5. What are the activities or relationships or processes that worked well or didn't work so well?

Learning and improvement actions

6. What are the lessons learned from the engagement activities?

7. If we had our time over again what would we:
    - keep
    - drop
    - change/add or create.