

Renewable Energy



Renewable Energy Development in Tasmania A Guideline for Community Engagement, Benefit Sharing and Local Procurement

Technical Supplement 2: Plan community engagement

2. a) Engage with Aboriginal communities

Engaging with Aboriginal organisations and community representatives in Tasmania differs from other jurisdictions as there are no legal native title holders. The *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1995)* is the key legislation providing for return of land and its management. This Act has legally returned 55,617 hectares of culturally and historically significant Crown land to the Aboriginal community, through the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania.

This includes areas that may be of interest to renewable energy developers, such as Putalina (Oyster Cove), Risdon Cove, Wybalenna and Cape Barren Island (see areas shaded red in the map)¹.

In these sites, the Aboriginal Land Council on Tasmania² must be consulted as the entity that owns and manages land on behalf of Tasmania's Aboriginal community.

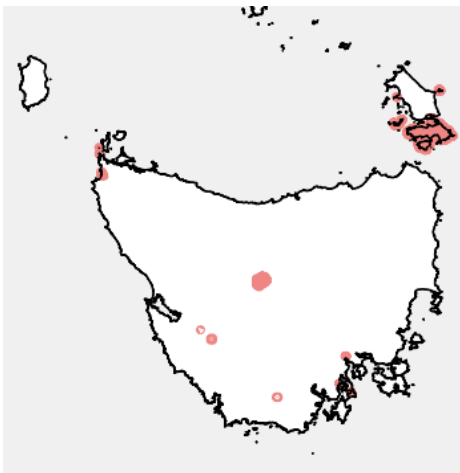


Figure 2.1 Areas of Tasmania that have been legally returned to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1995*.

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975* governs the protection of Aboriginal heritage and all renewable energy developments are subject to heritage studies under this Act. Developers are expected to consult beyond these minimum requirements to adequately consider the significance of Aboriginal heritage and its protection.

The First Nations Clean Energy Network have released best practice principles for clean energy projects, focusing on engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The following principles will help developers and governments to adopt a respectful and collaborative engagement approach with Tasmanian Aboriginal communities.

1. Free, prior and informed consent from Traditional Owners should be sought for all developments (regardless of legal land tenure) to ensure that standards found in multiple international human rights frameworks are reached. It is important to make sure the right individuals are spoken to to gain consent. Engaging widely, asking if there is anyone else to speak to and spending time with community to understand decision making authority is important.

¹ Source: National Native Title Tribunal: Indigenous Estates (2022) http://www.nntt.gov.au/Maps/Indigenous_Estates_and_Determinations_A1L.pdf

² The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania is a statutory body that offers a democratic, geographic and gender balanced Aboriginal representation for Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

2. Prioritisation of clear, accurate and accessible information throughout the life of the project with the understanding that language and cultural barriers may be present. This means providing information through a variety of mediums that work for the community, working with communities to decide what an agreement looks like, keeping well-kept records of engagement and adhering to language needs and cultural protocols.
3. Committing to the preservation and protection of cultural heritage sites by working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities to design and implement projects that reach development objectives and do not harm cultural sites. This could be delivered through undertaking cultural heritage impact assessment and management with a holistic view, including Sea Country and intangible aspects, and completing a Cultural Heritage Management Plan.
4. Acknowledging that Tasmanian Aboriginal people have cared for and protected the environment and country for thousands of years before European colonisation and support the rights of communities to continue their responsibilities to care for country. This understanding should be reflected through a development of a project specific Environmental Management Plan that identifies and protects culturally significant flora and fauna, supports ongoing environmental management and monitoring, and promotes greater environmental stewardship across the site.
5. Indirect impacts such as noise, traffic, aesthetic values, potential waste and water usage on Aboriginal communities should be included in engagement procedures as part of 'being a good neighbour'. Input from communities on potential impacts should be included in management plans with open communication encouraged throughout the life of the project.
6. Renewable energy developments should consider different options for how Aboriginal communities can share economic benefits. Providing an opportunity for ownership or co-ownership agreements is leading practice. It could also look like recruitment and retention of Aboriginal workers, training opportunities or rental payments for land. Projects should ensure that Aboriginal people are given support and opportunities to employment, business and procurement opportunities and are tailored to the requests of the community.
7. Social benefits for impacted Aboriginal communities should be tailored to specific needs and requests. This discussion should occur at an early stage and be incorporated into accountability targets and governance structures.
8. Renewable energy projects have an opportunity to enhance ecological, cultural and agricultural value of land through responsible land uses. This can look like supporting ranger programs or conservation projects.
9. Ensuring company staff and contractors have undertaken local cultural competency training and forming a Reconciliation Action Plan is a key action for respectful and meaningful engagement. This could be incorporated into governance structures to ensure ongoing improvement for all levels of government or companies.
10. All opportunities and benefits should be regularly monitored and reported back to the community to ensure commitments are upheld with proper implementation³. There should also be a complaints management process to allow any concerns to be heard and actioned.

³ Adapted from First Nations Clean Energy Networks Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Best Practice Principles for Clean Energy Projects (2022) and the Clean Energy Councils Clean Energy Council's Leading Practice Principles: First Nations and Renewable Energy (2024)

As part of respectful engagement, these Principles outline what is meant by Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), noting that it is found in numerous international human rights instruments and standards including in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Consent, where:

- “Consent” means the opportunity to approve or reject projects before commencement or withdraw or reconsider consent if the proposed activities change.
- “Free” means that a community must be able to give consent voluntarily and without coercion, intimidation or manipulation.
- “Prior” requires that the free consent of First Nations people is obtained before an action affecting them is taken.
- For consent to be “informed”, it must be based on accurate, timely, accessible and sufficient information.

For developers, respectful engagement must start by early in project planning and be maintained throughout all development phases, even if the project owner changes. If negotiating land access and for benefit sharing the nature and timelines of this negotiation must be developed by the community and the project owner alike and acknowledged that these may take several years to develop.

It will be essential to ask:

- how you can best engage and respect their particular needs for communication and timing;
- what issues and at what stages they would particularly like to be involved in;
- what outcomes they would like to see from the project for Tasmanian Aboriginal people; and
- how you can offer support to increase their capacity to engage with the project (eg choice of meeting location & times, funding, transport).

For further practical guidance on how to engage with Australia’s First Nations peoples and follow the ten best practice principles, refer to the Clean Energy Council’s *Leading Practice Principles: First Nations and Renewable Energy* paper. It offers practical advice on how to follow the Principles and address the following key barriers to effective engagement:

- Low cultural awareness within industry
- Changes in project ownership
- Legacy of extractive industry
- Identifying First Nations communities
- Engagement conducted for compliance
- Capacity and capability of First Nations

2. b) Understand community

“As the places we grow up in and live, communities shape our sense of identity and values system”⁴. People have deep, complex, and multifaceted relationships to their communities. Project developers will be proposing changes to the context of people’s lives, and this needs to be done with great sensitivity and understanding.

There are many types of community, such as geographic, cultural and communities of interest. Communities are bound together by a common situation, circumstance, or interest.

For the purposes of community engagement in renewable energy projects, the community will comprise all people living in close geographic vicinity of the proposed project, as well as others who might live further afield but who have a specific interest in the project. The boundaries of this local geographic community will be site-specific. Developers can take guidance from local people about what they identify as their community and recognise that there will likely be multiple communities that are needed to be engaged with in a project’s engagement approach. For example, each nearby settlement will likely identify as its own community and within this there will be segments. Local organisations and institutions also form a significant part of local communities, and it will be important to include them in engagement plans and partner with them to help understand and access different segments of the local community better. Existing local land uses, businesses and industries are also key parts of the community to seek to understand and involve.

Specific attention will need to be given to community engagement with the immediate neighbourhood of a proposed project. While this boundary will vary according to context (eg topography, size of the project, anticipated impacts, housing density and land use), it is likely to be all people living within 2-5km of the project area or the transmission corridor (further for run of river impacts in hydropower projects). This is the community of people with the highest interest and highest stake in the project and so they will need to be engaged in a more intensive way than the broader local community. It is recommended that time is invested to develop trusted relationships with this segment of the community and that there are iterative opportunities for group-based engagement and deliberation.



Figure 2.2 Indicative layers of community

⁴ Department of Energy, Water, Land and Planning (2021) [Community engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable energy Development in Victoria](#). Victorian Government, Melbourne. Page. 9.

Support communities to engage

People facing disadvantage and social marginalisation will face barriers to engagement. It is a developer's responsibility to be aware of this and implement strategies to enable these voices to be heard.

Certain segments of the community will need support and specific outreach to participate in engagement opportunities, as they experience (sometimes multiple) barriers to participation. Some hard-to-reach groups include low-income, elderly, Indigenous, single parents, mobility constrained and culturally and linguistically diverse people.

Parts of Tasmania have limited phone and internet connectivity which is also a barrier to certain types of engagement. It is important to be mindful that in some regions of Tasmania up to 50% of the local community is functionally illiterate and will struggle to engage with written content⁴.

Some strategies for increasing the accessibility of community engagement include:

- Ask people how they would like to be engaged and communicated with;
- Offer multiple, concurrent options for participating, eg 1-on-1 meetings if they can't make a group session; use phone or mail if email is not an option;
- Awareness of the acoustics of public events to allow hearing challenged people to participate;
- Offer to meet people in a place of their choosing, where they feel safe;
- Offer childcare services or to cover costs of childcare. Have a casual meet and greet with parents in a park after school;
- Offer translation options if required;
- Use gender neutral language, ask about people's preferred pronouns;
- Engage with local social services and social advocacy organisations and get their advice;
- Allow time, be patient – start early and don't rush things through; and
- Resource people to engage, where appropriate eg provide bursaries, sitting fees or transport.

Designing an appropriate suite of engagement methods that can engage a broad cross section of the community needs to be founded on a detailed understanding of the social context, as outlined in Section 5.

Community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers community members and creates stronger and more connected communities⁵. In conjunction with community engagement, this involves starting at first principles of being inclusive, building new networks of people,

⁴ As of 2012, only 52.8 per cent of Tasmanian men and 46.9 per cent of Tasmanian women possess an OECD literacy level of three or above. Below level three, an adult lacks the basic skills needed to understand and use written information such as from newspapers, magazines, books and brochures. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) [Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies](#). Australian Government, Canberra.

⁵ Smart, J. (2017). [What is community development?](#). Australian Institute of Family Studies.

running processes to identify shared values and visions for the community as a whole and building capacity to attend meetings, contribute as a group or as an individual.

When embarking on community development work in Tasmania it will be critical to collaborate with local service providers to ensure the work compliments existing initiatives. It is also important to be mindful that a community groups' understanding and energy literacy will not be equal to a proponent's, thus their capacity to understand must be continuously built up and supported for enduring and fair outcomes.

Case Study 2.1: George Town Future Impact Group's community development approach

The George Town Future Impact Group was established in 2016 as a partnership between community, local service providers, industry, local Council, and State Government to establish whole-of-community initiatives to drive positive change, especially in the areas of social disadvantage and community pride. The group takes a collaborative and participatory approach to working with the local community to understand what they want to see for their community and to try to shift long-term barriers and create opportunities.

In 2016 over 70 community representatives from across the municipality, including business, service providers, not-for-profits, government, and volunteer groups joined together for a 'Your Voice. Your Choice. Our future' workshop. This workshop identified key areas of interest that could be developed to lift all of George Town and see the municipality and its people achieve their full potential. A Future Impact Group, and subsequently a Future Impact Leadership Table emerged to harness all these community voices into a Collective Impact Initiative.

Key guiding principles that underpin their approach include:

- Working together to make a difference;
- Supporting community owned and driven initiatives based on common priorities;
- Building on existing strengths and initiatives to make the most of resources;
- Making a long-term commitment in the community; and,
- Being inclusive and encouraging everyone in the community to contribute.

The Future Impact Group has since delivered a 'Community Voices' project to survey the opinions of the whole municipality in order to understand the community's perceptions of, and aspirations for, George Town. This process involved 500 community members via one-on-one and group engagement, such as forums. The information gathered has been used to make informed decisions about future initiatives that can build on George Town's strengths and make high-impact change on things the community identifies as important.

Key issues raised include:

- Increasing pride, especially pride young people feel for their town;
- Shifting multigenerational unemployment;
- Ensuring local access to lifelong education opportunities and health services for all;

- Increasing inclusivity of the community, including recognition and respect for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Heritage.

The Future Impact Group has developed several programs to address these issues. For example, with the Beacon Foundation they run a very successful high schools' program, helping students move into trades and further education.

This example shows the value of community development work: involving the community closely to create positive plans for the future.

2. c) Community engagement as participation

Although community engagement has become a commonly used term, the ways that it is implemented vary widely and reflect varying degrees of commitment to participation in directing the processes and outcomes of a project. A useful way to understand these varied levels of participation is the International Association for Public Participation' Spectrum of Public Participation (modified in Table 2.1 below) that positions practices along a spectrum from simply informing through to empowering in the process of engagement.

Participation is an action that:

- Occurs over time, throughout the life of the project;
- Involves people in different ways, to different degrees via diverse engagement options;
- Creates opportunities for communities and stakeholders to impact the project; and
- Generates pathways for local people to be active participants.

Community engagement is also most successful when it occurs regularly via a diversity of methods through all stages of development. This provides many possible points of interaction with the project as well as builds familiarity, relationships, and trust over time. For example, during periods of inactivity, it will still be important to keep contact with the community, even if there is nothing new to update them on.

Community engagement is most successful when it establishes and delivers on clear expectations. For example, people will become disillusioned with providing feedback if they do not know how this feedback has been integrated. Developers must be clear on what feedback is being sought and why, how it will be used to inform the project and how the outcomes will be reported back to the community. This involves setting clear expectations about what aspects of the project are open to change and those that are not.

Table 2.1 A spectrum of approaches to community engagement (adapted from IAP2)

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community engagement objective	Provide balanced & objective information	Obtain feedback from the community on	Work directly with community throughout the process & all	Partner with community in each aspect of planning, development &	For the community to lead the development of

	Assist community in understanding all aspects of the project, including possible problems/ issues	plans, options &/or decisions	stages of the project Ensure community concerns & aspirations are consistently understood & considered	decision making, including the development of alternatives & the identification of the preferred solution	the renewable energy project Placing decision-making in the hands of the community
Promise to community	To keep the community informed through all stages of development, including issues & delays	To keep the community informed Listen & acknowledge suggestions & concerns Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision	To work with community to ensure concerns & aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision	Look to community for direct advice & innovation in formulating solutions Incorporate advice & recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible	To implement what the community decides

Different 'levels' of engagement on the spectrum will be relevant at different times, with different stakeholders and for different aspects of the project. It is not a hierarchy; empowerment is not necessarily best. For example, simple decisions will be better at 'inform' level, as more involved participation might be redundant or a waste of time. All positions on the spectrum can be done with integrity. The chosen level of participation will vary depending on goals, timeframes, budgets, context, and the level of community interest/concern.

It is expected that every project will provide frequent and consistent engagement at the consult and involve level, and some opportunities for collaboration and empowerment.

The further to the right on the spectrum, the greater the influence the community has on decision-making with regards to a project. At each level a different promise to the community applies – a promise that the developer can be held accountable to. Where the community is involved in more active participation, it is essential to deliver on the promises made: eg if community members are involved in discussing an issue and proposing solutions, you must report back on how this information was considered & incorporated.

In developing an approach to community engagement, it is important to identify moments or decisions in the project that you might be able to open up to increased levels of community participation. For example, it works well to collaborate or empower the community in the design of the benefit sharing strategy, or the design of the outreach to local businesses in preparation for procurement opportunities.

2. d) Timing of engagement through the project lifecycle

Engagement is most effective in developing constructive relationships and trust if it starts as early as possible. For the project as a whole, this means during site selection, even if at this stage only potential hosts and neighbours are engaged. For each phase of a project, engagement should start before plans are set. For

example, consulting on micro-siting of infrastructure before the planning application is submitted; engaging with local tradespeople well before tenders go out. In addition, the timing chosen needs to be place appropriate. For example, in a farming community it will be difficult to get quality participation in engagement efforts during planting and harvest times.

Figure 2.2 below outlines key stages common to all large-scale renewable energy projects. Most of these stages are present in other industry guides, however this Guideline draws particular focus to the design and financial close phases, as there are important community engagement activities in these phases that warrant identification. For detailed guidance on community engagement in phases 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8 see the Clean Energy Council’s (2017) Community Engagement Guidelines for the Australian Wind Industry pages 18, 24-47. Depending on the stage of the project “who” is doing the engagement with the community might change



Figure 2.3 Key stages of renewable energy projects

from developer to owner or EPC contractor. It is critical that transparent and trusted hand over of community relationships is undertaken to ensure consistence and delivery of prior commitments are made and duplication doesn’t occur.

After the project has been deemed feasible from a social, financial, environmental, and economic perspective, it proceeds to a phase of developing design ideas for the various components of work that constitute a viable project. During this phase, as designs are developed and refined, it is important to iteratively engage with different segments of the community to get feedback and input on specific aspects of the project. For example, hosts and neighbours will be interested to provide input on road placement and technology siting. It will be useful to engage the broader community in a process to co-design the benefit sharing plan and to begin establishing contacts and networks to prepare for local procurement opportunities.

The financial close phase occurs once finance has been secured for the project, but before construction begins. It is a phase of developing the contracts and legal arrangements needed to deliver the project. This includes drafting and going out to tender for construction and maintenance, which is one of the most significant aspects of a project affecting local procurement opportunities. It is also the phase when the structures and governance to support the benefit sharing plans are put into place, in preparation for the first benefit sharing to occur ahead of construction.

Developers can include the commitments made relating to future engagement, benefit sharing and local procurement as an appendix to the Development Application and as a supplementary part of the Planning Approval conditions. This way, if the project is sold in the future, these commitments are public and clear.

Case Study 2.2: Doing engagement early in the project lifecycle

It can be difficult to know how to engage with communities early in the project lifecycle, when there is a lot of detail yet to be confirmed.

Hydro Tasmania navigates this by taking an honest and upfront approach, sharing information about the timeline, how communication will occur and when and how feedback will be sought. They also acknowledge that there will be questions from the community that they can't answer which may create anxiety but assure people that they'll be kept updated through the process as the project details become more certain.

In their experience, communities want the opportunity to engage early, understand that things are still progressing and appreciate the opportunity to talk directly to the project team, including design engineers and construction planners. They also experience that communities want to be kept informed, and they plan their engagement around project milestones when new information is available to share or when community input is needed.

One of their senior community engagement staff said that this way, the community are provided with meaningful and valuable updates and understand the purpose of the engagement.

They also schedule engagement so that community feedback comes at a productive time, when preparatory thinking has been done, but options are still open for discussion and feedback can inform decision making. For example, "When we do share design options, it is at the stage where we are confident that they are technically sound and that we have a reasonable understanding of potential social and environmental impacts. We can then share this for community validation and feedback as part of the design iteration process".

"We manage expectations by explaining which aspects of the design are fixed (not negotiable) and the reasons why, and also which are flexible. It is about building trust in your process and taking people on the design journey so that feedback to inform design is captured at the appropriate time and the community understand why things are where they are and the trade-off decisions along the way."

Table 2.2 Summary of indicative community engagement activities and purpose by project stage*

Phase	Activities	Purpose
1. Site selection	Desktop research, social context mapping, stakeholder mapping, surveys, social impact assessment, social feasibility studies; reach out to landowners, neighbours & key local stakeholders for 1-on-1 & small group meetings.	Develop an understanding of the social context for the project to inform if the project is likely to be socially feasible & to inform a strategic & appropriate approach to community engagement & benefit sharing. Start conversations early with key

		people & set clear expectations, including that the project might not proceed.
2. Feasibility studies	Continue & deepen the work started in 1. Expand to include a broader range of local stakeholders & methods. Begin group-based discussion with the project neighbourhood, introduce ideas of benefit sharing. Take key stakeholders on a tour of a nearby operating project if possible. Develop a detailed Community Engagement Plan & get feedback on it. Establish a project website, publish engagement activity underway & contact information.	Broaden the range of local people & stakeholders you are developing relationships with. Gather more detailed information about the social context, & particularly the neighbourhood. Develop a clear sense of the community engagement & benefit sharing needs for the project to build strong support. Develop a clear & locally appropriate plan for more intensive engagement in future phases.
3. Design	Engagement now reaches out to the whole community surrounding the proposed project site. Broaden engagement to include outreach to a broad cross section of the community to gain input & advice on aspects of project designs & plans, including benefit sharing. Use a range of engagement methods to reach diverse segments. Continue group-based conversations with the project neighbourhood to refine design ideas.	Ensure to include community input & feedback iteratively as designs are developed, avoid engaging on completed plans. Create project designs that are appropriate for the local context & ensure local people feel heard & well informed. Develop relationships & trust within the community. Begin identifying & scoping possible organisations & businesses to form partnerships with.
4. Planning & Approvals	Present project plans to the community via a variety of methods. Provide opportunities for dialogue & input on aspects of the project, especially with hosts & neighbours. Report back on plans as they change & are influenced by the community. Involve the community in developing detailed benefit sharing plans & local procurement strategies.	Ensure the local community is well informed of plans & has opportunities to provide feedback & input. Involve key stakeholders as much as possible in developing & refining plans for the project. Consult with local business, industry & education/ training organisations to prepare for local procurement & employment. Form partnerships to deliver strategic benefit sharing programs where appropriate.
5. Financial close	Benefit sharing mechanisms are established & beginning. Legal vehicles for co-investment or co-ownership are established if applicable. Contracts for procurement & construction are finalised. Engage local people & business in preparation for tenders. Consult on community needs during construction and	Ensuring that benefit sharing is up & running ahead of constructions. Ensure local people & business are well briefed & prepared to take up procurement opportunities. Plan for least disturbance during construction.

	have clear pathways for complaints/feedback during construction that can be acted upon promptly.	
6. Construction	Train all staff & contractors on engagement expectations & appropriate community liaison/ behaviour. Ensure regular communications & direct phone contact with a project representative on the ground. Establish complaints management. Host community events to witness construction. Benefit sharing starts. Act on any site complaints swiftly & publish the action taken.	This is the time of greatest local disturbance & change in the community, as such it will likely be the time of greatest contact between communities & the project & its staff & contractors. Local people on the ground help to report issues & keep tabs on the general sentiment towards the project. Realising opportunities for local employment & contracting. Benefits are being experienced in the community, as well as change/ disturbance.
7. Operation	Have a community launch event / celebration. Host school & other tours. Benefit sharing ongoing. Include communities in evaluation eg of benefit sharing. Locally based staff continue engagement. Celebrate benefit sharing outcomes. Act on any complaints swiftly & publish the action taken	Continue to sustain good relationships in the community. Share the benefits of the project. Keep people engaged. Have productive ways to address concerns. Have local people as ongoing employees.
8. Re- or de-commissioning	Engage local people in making decisions about the future re- or decommissioning plans for the project & how this phase will be managed. Prepare people, businesses & organisations for employment or contract opportunities.	Plans for re- or decommissioning are in line with community desires. Ensure the community's expectations are met regarding site rehabilitation.

*Assumes that a base level communication is occurring throughout to ensure all segments of the community and all stakeholders are kept well informed as relevant to them. This includes all 1-way communication methods such as personalised letters/email, newsletters, website, and newspaper columns.

Community Engagement Plans

A Community Engagement Plan outlines the proposed approach to engagement and how this feeds into project development phases. It will outline the principles that guide the strategy and its desired outcomes, as well as the specific methods of engagement and when they will be undertaken and why. It will also outline plans for dealing with issues and complaints. Finally, it will indicate how on-going evaluation of engagement will be done.

It is always important to consider the historical engagement of any project in the process of developing future engagement plans. Evaluate how engagement has gone to date and what could be improved. This might involve learning about and evaluating community engagement and social licence issues for other big projects in the region, renewable or otherwise.

Given a community engagement plan seeks to reach out and involve the local community, it is a good idea to include community input in the process of developing the strategy. This could involve working with local people and stakeholders or holding a workshop to test principles and methods to help determine what is going to be most effective and appropriate for the local context. Stakeholders to the project should be presented with a version of the community engagement plan, so that there is a socialisation of what is planned to occur and there is opportunity for feedback. This could include local government, hosts and neighbours, local service providers, state government, regulators, financiers, or other stakeholders.

It is good practice to have a public version of the community engagement plan that is shared (eg on the project website).

In developing a community engagement plan it is important to consider what staffing and other resources will be required and how to include this in project development plans.

An example outline for a community engagement plan is provided in below.

Example outline of a Community Engagement Plan

1. Project information and stage
2. Social context
3. Engagement activities & outcomes to date
4. Community Engagement Principles
5. Community Engagement Objectives & Desired Outcomes
6. Key Stakeholders & Desired Level of Engagement (including Stakeholder Mapping)
7. Communicating: One-way Engagement Methods
 - 7.1 Key messages & project narrative
 - 7.2 Communication Methods
8. Seeking Input & Feedback: Two-way Engagement Methods
 - 8.1. Key times & types of decisions that will benefit from two-way engagement
 - 8.2 Engagement methods
 - 8.3 Methods of reporting back to the community
9. Implementation Plan Across Project Phases (including reporting on historical activity)
 - 9.1 Site selection
 - 9.2 Feasibility studies
 - 9.3 Design
 - 9.4 Planning & Approvals

- 9.5 Financial close
- 9.6 Construction
- 9.7 Commissioning & Operations
- 9.8 Decommissioning
- 10. Complaint Resolution Process
- 11. Evaluation Process & Timing
- 12. Staff & Resource Allocation

2. e) Methods of community engagement

It is important to use a mix of engagement methods as suitable for the project phase and appropriate to the local context. Ensure engagement is sustained over time and allow for multiple points of contact and engagement. Developers must create opportunities for 2-way discussions and in-person engagement. Remember that different types of engagement and communications will suit different people in a community and by using a range of methods you are able to reach a broader base.

Different types of engagement methods include:

- **1-way engagement:** communication broadcast that might be personalised (eg letters) or general (eg newsletters, media articles, websites);
- **2-way engagement:** surveys, forums, workshops, stalls, drop-in information sessions that allow for dialogue via conversations and discussion;
- **Online/virtual:** phone calls, emails, webinars, online workshops, websites that facilitate virtual engagement;
- **In-person:** meetings, shop fronts, 'kitchen table' conversations, focus groups, workshops, drop-in sessions, stalls, events that facilitate face-to-face, in person engagement;
- **1-on-1 versus group-based deliberation:** sometimes it is important to create space for communities to discuss ideas and issues with each other, hearing from their peers; and
- **Formal and informal:** allow for both, some people will feel intimidated by formal settings (eg forum) and prefer an informal environment (eg shop front drop-in).

When determining which methods to use, consider some people may not be confident with technology and may have only basic literacy. Use simple language, diagrams, and real-life examples. Include options for talking things through instead of reading (eg door knocking, stalls, shop front, drop-in sessions) or listening to content (eg have audio function on websites).

Invest time and resources to spend time in local communities and ideally employ local staff to be based locally. It is not recommended to outsource any of the activities referenced in this Guideline to external consultants or public relations firms. Rather it is recommended that internal capacity is built within developer companies via professional development and training in the specific skills and knowledges necessary to deliver quality community engagement, benefit sharing and local procurement. It is also recommended to seek expert advice in developing or reviewing company policies and strategies relating to these things (but to

do delivery on the ground with inhouse staff). There are circumstances where independent facilitators may be appropriate and useful to deliver aspects of the work included in this Guideline. In these instances, be sure to have developer staff working side by side to develop relationships, understanding and trust.

Table 2.3 Inventory of community engagement methods

Method	Description
One-way communications	<p>Provide project information & updates (including notice of opportunities for input) via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hard copy & email personalised letters & newsletters - Website with up-to-date information about the project & engagement activities, plus FAQs, direct contact details & feedback/ complaint functionality. - Media: be proactive with the media & use it as a tool. Write press releases & include good images, have a regular newspaper column, use newspaper ads. Reach out to local radio. - Scope interest for other organisations to share information in their publications. - Establish public information displays (eg photomontages, posters) or live resource monitoring/ generation data displays and/or audio-visual installations.
Two-way engagement	<p>These allow for conversation, questions, feedback & dialogue, methods include:</p> <p>Telephone lines, ideally direct & personal.; one-on-one meetings; social media; regular listening posts (eg at local café/ pub/ club); small group discussions; street stalls; surveys & polls, including via social media; informal dinners/ BBQ & get-togethers; drop-in information sessions; staffed shop front; presence at community events & markets; public forums; targeted workshops; school programs (eg guest speaking, field trips, competitions).</p>
Community outreach	<p>These methods help to broaden & deepen the relationships in the community:</p> <p>Meet with all neighbours within an area size specific to the local environment & technology type; presentations to local interest groups; public launches at different stages of the project's development; celebratory events that allow the community to experience & learn about the project/ technology; volunteer & advocate trainings to get people skilled up to talk about the project; host or partner with another group to deliver a festival, ball, fair, art exhibition, fun run, etc.</p> <p>'Snowball techniques' of asking local people who you should be reaching out to.</p>
Decision-making / feedback loops	<p>Methods to increase participation in project design & delivery:</p> <p>Community workshops & focus groups on specific aspects of the project; polling & surveys; community advisory committee; community co-design process for key decisions; consensus-building participatory deliberation & decision-making eg citizens jury; industry round tables; decisions & rationale reported back to community via letters, newsletters, phone calls, meetings etc.; complaints management</p>

	mechanisms & respectful conflict resolution; external facilitation or mediation where required.
Working with local groups and representatives	<p>Methods for forming partnerships to deliver mutual benefit: have meetings; form reference groups or roundtables; scope common interest & possible collaborations; create jointly delivered programs.</p> <p>With: Local, State & Federal Government representatives; local community organisations (eg Tasmanian Aboriginal elders, Landcare, bird watching groups, conservation groups, climate action groups, advocacy groups, etc.), social services & education institutions (high schools, TAFE, etc.).</p>
Firsthand experiences and events	<p>Methods that create opportunities to experience the technology firsthand & ask questions of the hosts/ workers about their experience: eg site tours to an operating wind farm & speak to the site host about their experience. Organise field trips (pre-construction) or open days (post-construction). Involve people in the construction process, if possible, eg sod turning event, turbine arrival event, community forum to brief people on the technical specification, with physical examples present (eg solar panels). Opening celebrations, celebrations when benefit sharing contributions (eg grants, scholarships) are announced.</p>
Local presence	<p>Methods to increase local level relationships & have a consistent local presence: Having local employees/volunteers working consistently on the ground doing face-to-face engagement, not outsourced to PR firms, ideally a local person with experience/ training in community engagement and/or community development. Offer to provide community engagement training so that a local person can take up the opportunity.</p> <p>Have a visible presence (eg shop front, market, or event stalls).</p>
Complaints resolution process	<p>Have a proactive complaints resolution process that meets the recommendations of the Federal Energy Infrastructure Commissioner and is publicly accessible. This includes having easily available and direct contact information, including a 24-hour contact number.</p>

Case Study 2.3: Using mix of engagement methods

Hepburn Wind is a 4.2MW, 2 turbine wind farm located 8km from Daylesford, Victoria. It is owned and operated by a cooperative with over 2,000 member-investors, more than half of which are from the local area.

From the beginning, the project sought to build strong public support for renewable energy to assist the energy transitions necessitated by climate change. As a result, they placed a strong emphasis on community engagement and wanting to provide opportunities to for people to participate in the project. Hepburn's approach to community engagement has emphasised face-to-face engagement and dialogue to enable community input into project design.

Hepburn Wind used a range of engagement methods from the earliest stages of the project, combining multiple methods to reach a diverse audience and ensure a broad base of the local community were engaged. Methods used during the design and planning phases included:

- Weekly/ monthly stalls in the main street or farmer's market;
- Website, regular newspaper columns and community newsletters;
- Public workshops and forums to provide information and workshop particular aspects of the project;
- Education tours for interested community members to nearby operating wind farms;
- Multiple meetings with neighbours & interest groups; and
- Presence at community parades and festivals.

Through this mix of methods Hepburn Wind enabled direct, one-on-one engagement where people could ask questions and provide feedback, as well as group discussion where people could hear from each other and work together to develop options and solutions. They also provided a range of communications materials to assist a regular flow of information, while the stalls and participation in community events enabled relationship building and casual interactions with the community. The education tours were important to allow people to personally experience what a wind farm is like and to ask questions of the host landowner.

Community Advisory Committees

Community Advisory Committees play an important role in building relationships and positive feedback loops with the community. Community Advisory Committees should include:

- Having broad representation of different segments of the local community (eg hosts, neighbours, key local groups such as progress associations, Landcare, Aboriginal groups, local government);
- Having an independent & trained facilitator (paid by the developer);
- Having clear terms of reference that include deliberation and input/advice on aspects of project design and benefit, including clear mechanisms for decisions to be reported back to the committee;
- Have clear means for how positions on the Committee are appointed and how people can apply, preferably this would be a democratic process and would allow for renewal over time;
- Meeting from early stages of project planning through the entire life of the project, with the regularity of meetings adjusting to the current needs of the project stage (as agreed by the Committee);
- Having publicly accessible minutes; and
- Have a means for broader community input into agendas and discussion as appropriate.

General tips for delivering better community engagement

- Start by getting to know people, find points of commonality. Connect as people who respect each other first and foremost.

- Listen and repeat back what you have heard.
- In a group setting, try sitting in a circle or arc rather than a classic 'presenter-audience' model.
- Always allow for people to ask questions. Acknowledging when an answer is not known in a genuine way can build trust and create a sense of transparency. Take questions with unknown answers on notice if need be and get back to the community. Publish questions and answers in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of the project website.
- Take note of key discussion points, any actions and who is responsible for them and provide a copy to the person/community you are meeting with.

2. f) Doing community engagement in REZ: Addressing legacy issues and cumulative impacts

The Tasmanian Government is planning to establish Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) to support increased generation and transmission of renewable energy. As Government seek to attract developments to specific geographic areas, these regions will become increasingly concentrated with renewable energy projects - all of which will be seeking to engage the community and undertake benefit sharing and local procurement activities. This will come with benefits as well as challenges.

The benefits are associated with the scale of positive impacts that can come from a region becoming a host to multiple renewable energy projects. These include more local jobs, more flow-on economic impacts in the local economy, more benefit sharing activities and impacts – as well as making a significant contribution to increasing the use of clean, renewable energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to help address climate change.

The challenges are associated with cumulative impacts of multiple projects, consultation fatigue and the legacies of negative experiences in the past. Below are some strategies for addressing these with regards to community engagement practice.

When doing community engagement in a REZ it is important to be mindful that there may already be multiple other renewable energy projects also doing engagement activities concurrently, as well as engagement by others on other issues. Consultation fatigue results when there is too much talking and not enough action, or simply when there are too many concurrent consultation processes going on.

To avoid duplication efforts, particularly within regional energy zones or energy hubs where there are multiple projects, developers need to coordinate with other projects and government. This could be through a peak body, or working groups facilitated by the responsible lead entity (eg REZ Coordinator). The types of aspects that multiple projects and Government could collaborate on include:

- Collaborate with a trusted and appropriate local organisation to deliver some aspects of engagement for multiple projects eg the Chamber of Commerce to engage local businesses to prepare for procurement opportunities;
- Work together to engage with relevant stakeholders to establish training opportunities;
- Collaborate on a community development process to increase local capacity to self-organise and engage better with the projects; and/or,
- Run an awareness and education campaign in the community.

- Share a shop-front space;
- Co-fund a full-time local engagement staff person.

Remember that too much community involvement without concrete outcomes can mean that people lose interest or become cynical. The community may already be involved in lots of different meetings and consultation processes — understandably, a poorly executed consultation will not achieve community involvement and will reduce the effectiveness of future consultations. If people do not think their involvement will have any impact, they are unlikely to engage. Following this Guideline will help to design community engagement processes that deliver quality engagement and build trust.

Part of assessing the social context should have included understanding similar projects that have occurred in the region and how these projects were received. Previous bad experiences of community engagement or benefit sharing will linger in a community's collective mind. Developers would be well placed to acknowledge this and address up front what they will do to avoid similar experiences.

To re-set after the community has had a negative experience and re-built trust it might be helpful to:

- Acknowledge what went wrong and how local people are feeling;
- Fund an external evaluation process involving the local community and to develop alternative strategies going forward;
- Appoint new staff to community engagement roles, ideally a trusted local person with appropriate skills who is based locally; and
- Continue to 'show up' and act with honesty, patience, and integrity.

For more information on engaging with Aboriginal communities see:

- O'Neil, L., Hunt, J. and Maynard, G. (2021) [Clean Energy Agreement Making on First Nations Land: what do strong agreements contain?](#) Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University.
- Original Power Engagement Principles (2021) www.originalpower.org.au.
- First Nations Clean Energy Network (2022), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Best Practice Principles for Clean Energy Projects, First Nations Clean Energy Network
- CAT (Centre for Appropriate Technology) (2010) [The National Indigenous Infrastructure Guide](#). Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.
- NSW Government (2021) First Nations Guidelines: First Nations income and employment opportunities from electricity infrastructure projects.
- Canadian Wind Energy Association (2017) [Best Practices for Indigenous and Public Engagement](#)

For more information on community engagement see:

- Clean Energy Council (CEC) (2018) [Community Engagement Guidelines for the Australian Wind Industry](#). Melbourne.
- Lane, T. and J. Hicks (2017). [Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development. A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers](#). Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victorian Government, Melbourne.
- Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (2016) [Wind Farm Complaints Handling Bulletin](#). Australian Government, Canberra.
- Annual Reports of the Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner. www.aeic.gov.au. Australian Government, Canberra.
- Clean Energy Council (CEC) (2018) [Community Engagement Guidelines for Building Powerlines for Renewable Energy Developments](#). Melbourne.
- Department of Energy, Water, Land and Planning (2021) [Community engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable energy Development in Victoria](#). Victorian Government.

Department of State Growth

GPO Box 536 Hobart
TAS 7001 Australia

Phone: 03 6166 4466

Email: guideline@recfit.tas.gov.au

Web: recfit.tas.gov.au

© State of Tasmania May 2024