

Case Study

Project	Mid Murray Council Open Space, Recreation and Public Realm Plan
Organisation undertaking the engagement	Mid Murray Council, with consultants Wax and Suter Planning
Estimated cost of the engagement	
Estimated person hours associated with the engagement	1400

What was the project?

This project involved the engagement of community and stakeholders from across rural townships in the development of a strategic plan incorporating three components – the strategy, five district plans and an implementation strategy for the provision, development and management of open space, recreation and public realm facilities and spaces in the Mid Murray Council area.

What were the objectives of the engagement?

The objectives of the engagement were to:

- understand staff and community satisfaction with the current offering of open space, recreational and public realm facilities and spaces
- understand staff and community aspirations for the future provision and management of open space, recreational and public realm facilities and spaces
- ensure that all those interested had the ability to provide early input to inform the development of the plan
- build relationships and a community of interest to support the future provision and management of facilities and open spaces.

What was the ‘scope of influence’?

Community and stakeholders could help shape the strategies and projects that would be included in the plan. It was made clear that Council would not be able to deliver all projects but that some would need to be delivered in partnership, or by other agencies, or be community led.

Engagement occurred across 3 stages to ensure that engagement occurred early and was ongoing throughout the project:

Stage 1 - To gain early input to help shape the draft plan (INVOLVE)

Stage 2 - To obtain feedback on the draft plan (CONSULT)

Stage 3 - Following adoption of the plan, ongoing engagement in the delivery of projects (COLLABORATE)

How was the engagement undertaken?

For Stage 1, a range of activities were used to gather information that would inform the development of the draft plan. Activities were tailored to different stakeholders and locations and designed to gather detail about what participants thought of current open space and recreational offerings and to gather aspirational ideas for the future. These early engagement activities included:

- seven community workshops held at a variety of key locations across the district so that conversations could be tailored to the local context (i.e. 'what I want for my local open space')
- online and hard copy surveys for those who were unable to/did not want to attend a workshop
- a walk through a significant local park to gather ideas for its master planning
- individual workshops with key stakeholder groups (eg RSL, schools, community associations) to target conversations to their areas of interest
- a design exercise for local school students who produced designs for local parks and riverfront destinations that captured their aspirations
- a stall at a local market to capture ideas from those who may not readily participate in other activities
- a social media video campaign of local children in open space environments discussing community aspirations
- media releases to local newspapers and magazines
- radio interviews.

For Stage 2, the activities were designed to gather feedback on the draft plan. The activities included online and hardcopy surveys, calling for submissions, and holding meetings with key stakeholders to discuss elements of the draft plan particular to them.

The engagement was promoted through emails and letters to stakeholders, media releases, local press advertising and through regular posts on the Council's Facebook page.

Stage 3 of the engagement is ongoing, with Mid-Murray Council working collaboratively with the community and stakeholders to deliver initiatives arising from the final plan.

How was the engagement's success measured?

The project sought to maximise participation from across stakeholder groups identified at the project's outset. Systems were put in place to ensure that participation numbers (and where possible demographics) were collected across the activities.

The outcomes of the engagement were reported on in an engagement report that was presented alongside the final plan.

How did Council 'close the loop'?

A database of contacts was established and updated with new participants as the project progressed. Communications via this database provided a way for participants to be kept updated of the project's progress as well as learn about opportunities to continue their participation, such as providing comment on the draft plan.

The engagement report for the project also clearly showed community feedback and how it had informed the final plan.

How does this project demonstrate the Community Engagement Charter's principles in action?

Principle	How this project reflects this principle in action
<i>Engagement is genuine</i>	A genuine effort was made to hear from stakeholders and the community by providing a variety of opportunities to participate at different locations and times of day including workshops, surveys, pop up events, social media campaigns and direct meetings. The Council was open to the ideas put forward and was available to meet directly with those interested. The Council also went to places people would be (e.g. via the market stall or playgroup sessions) rather than expecting them to attend a scheduled event.
<i>Engagement is inclusive and respectful</i>	Engagement activities were tailored to the diverse stakeholder groups of all ages. Direct meetings with stakeholder groups enabled discussions about a specific interest/s of a group. Hard copy surveys enabled those without computer access or high literacy levels to participate. School activities were fun and interactive for students.
<i>Engagement is fit for purpose</i>	The engagement activities were targeted to capture the information needed to inform the plan. For instance, walks through a local park and local community workshops captured people's perspectives and ideas to inform the directions for open space and recreation in their towns. Creative ways were used to capture feedback from all age brackets from senior citizens' groups, to parents to children and youth in various settings.
<i>Engagement is informed and transparent</i>	Participants were kept informed of the project's progress through emails and public announcements and how their feedback was considered was articulated in an engagement report.
<i>Engagement is reviewed and improved</i>	TBC

Link: www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1017

This type of engagement process, or elements of, could be used in relation to the following designated planning instruments:

- regional planning
- rezoning under the Planning and Design Code

