

Achieving effective community engagement about biosecurity. A checklist for engagement practitioners

This checklist should be read in conjunction with *Biosecurity engagement guidelines: Principles and practical advice for involving communities and Biosecurity engagement guidelines: how to develop an engagement strategy including a monitoring and evaluation component*. Available at dafg.gov.au/abares

Step	Remarks and considerations	✓	or	✗
1. Common principles for engaging stakeholders and target groups				
Whether engaging stakeholders or target groups, identify:				
- the purpose of engagement	Ideally, what would you like them to do?			
- the capacity they have, in terms of knowledge and skills, motivation or resources to be engaged	Some stakeholders and target groups might need help to be engaged through, for example, education, training or refunds for travel and other expenses.			
- the level of engagement needed	Should they only be made aware of the initiative, are they to be consulted or do they need to form part of the decision making?			
Keep stakeholders and target groups informed about the progress	Once people have been successfully engaged in a process or program, it is important to maintain their interest by providing them with updates. If they don't hear about the program again, it might lead to negative outcomes or to a sense of doubt about how valued their involvement really is.			
2. Principles for engaging stakeholders				
Engage wide	Include too many stakeholders initially rather than missing out on crucial ones. Ensure all relevant divisions in large organisations are in the loop.			
Engage early	Start stakeholder engagement as soon as possible to ensure those who can influence decision making have enough opportunity to do so. Passionate people often make good champions for a cause.			
Look for influential people with passion for the issue, not just particular roles				
3. Principles for developing an engagement strategy for target groups				
Clearly define the objective of the engagement strategy	Articulate what success of the strategy would look like.			

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To choose and design engagement activities, consider:

- The message (what?)
 - Use 'What's in it for me?' messages.
- The messenger (who?)
 - Use people who are trusted and respected by the target groups as intermediaries.
- Timing (when?)
 - Avoid target groups' busy times.
- Tools (how?)
 - Use a wide range of tools to cater for different learning styles. This includes tools that are passive (onus is on target group members to find information on websites, request copies of documents) and active ('information finds targets groups'; doorknocking, presentations as part of community events, shed meetings for growers). Ensure a significant number of engagement activities are built on social enablers. For example:
 - *Trust* – Who do the target groups trust and respect that champion the cause?
 - *Relationships and networks* – What existing networks could be tapped into?
 - *Peer pressure* – Are bonds between stakeholder group members strong enough to significantly influence each other?
 - *Commitment* – How can commitment be demonstrated by the delivery agency? How can commitment and ownership be encouraged within stakeholder groups?
 - *Opportunities to 'piggyback' messages* onto other topics, activities or events.
 - Test and refine tools and materials; for example, run pilots or use a random sample from stakeholder groups to ensure the engagement tool has the intended outcome.

Articulate assumptions
 The link between an activity and its expected outcome is normally based on assumptions. Articulating assumptions can be a powerful way to help finetune the engagement strategy and allow for early response if assumptions prove incorrect.

Conduct a baseline investigation to better understand target groups
 Could be done before or shortly after development of the first draft of the engagement strategy. Involvement of the engagement team is highly recommended (rather than completely outsourcing it to a consultant).

4. Continual improvement

Instigate a regular two-way feedback and action mechanism between engagement team/coordinator and key stakeholders
 Work through social enablers such as trust, respect, credibility, genuineness, responsiveness and transparency.

Include a monitoring and evaluation component in the engagement strategy to underpin adaptive program management
 To ensure activities are meaningful ensure the monitoring and evaluation component is primarily based on the engagement team's information needs.