Abstract:

Traffic Design Group (TDG) was engaged by Waikato Regional Council to undertake a region wide review on the provision of Total Mobility (TM) and the effort required to lift its provision to the new national standard, identified by the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) as Phases 1 and 2.

TM is a scheme which enables people with mobility disabilities, who are not able to drive or access bus services, to receive discounted taxi fares for their transport needs. TM is provided through a highly collaborative effort. Central and local government provide funding and management, not-for-profit agencies assess and manage TM members and taxi companies provide the transport.

Recognising the collaborative nature of the provision of TM this review engaged in extended close consultation with representatives of all agencies involved.

A post project review was carried out against published research on consultation. We wanted to know whether we could have done better, especially where we had encountered resistance to our consultation approach. This allowed for comparison of the consultation techniques used during the review and what the literature suggests.

This paper, using the TM Review project as an example, seeks to demonstrate the application of an approach to consultation suitable for a multi-agency project, which requires each agency to understand, support and contribute to the delivery of a successful outcome.
INTRODUCTION

Traffic Design Group (TDG) was engaged by Waikato Regional Council (WRC) to undertake a region wide review on the provision of Total Mobility (TM) and the effort required to lift its provision to a new nationally consistent level of delivery based on the document "Total Mobility Scheme – A Guide for Local Authorities" produced by the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA).

TM is a scheme which enables people with mobility disabilities, who are not able to drive or access bus services, to receive discounted taxi fares for their transport needs. In the Waikato Region TM is currently provided in Hamilton, Taupo and Tokoroa.

Recognising the collaborative nature of the provision of TM the review engaged in close consultation over four stages with representatives of all agencies involved. Agencies included; government agencies (NZTA, South Waikato District Council (SWDC) and Taupo District Council (TDC)); assessment agencies (for example not-for-profit community organisations such as Life Unlimited and the Parkinson’s Society), and the transportation providers such as Taxi Operators. The four phases of consultation ran from August to November 2012.

During the consultation phases several issues and unexpected barriers were encountered when dealing with small isolated not-for-profit stakeholders. This paper includes post-project research into better ways to approach consultation within community organisations and how to counter resistance to change.

This paper, using the TM Review project as an example, seeks to demonstrate the application of an approach to consultation suitable for a multi-agency project, which requires each agency to understand, support and contribute to the delivery of a successful outcome.

BACKGROUND

The New Zealand Total Mobility Scheme provides subsidised taxi services to people who have an impairment that prevents them from undertaking any component of a public transport journey unaccompanied and in a safe and dignified manner.

In the Waikato, users of the Total Mobility scheme receive a book of vouchers that they fill out themselves and present to the taxi driver in order to receive the discounted trip. An example of the current Total Mobility voucher used in the Waikato Region can be seen in Figure 1 below. As of May 2012 there were 2,562 Total Mobility members in Hamilton, 420 in Tokoroa and 485 in Taupo. In May of 2012 they undertook 2,514, 569 and 524 trips per area respectively.

The ‘local share’ component for funding of the Total Mobility scheme is provided by Waikato Regional Council (WRC) for Hamilton services, Taupo District Council (TDC) for Taupo services and South Waikato District Council (SWDC) for Tokoroa services.
WRC has the responsibility for delivery of the Total Mobility scheme within the Waikato region. The scheme currently operates in Hamilton, Taupo and Tokoroa only. Of the 382,716 people living in the Waikato Region (Census 2006) approximately 43% live in an area covered by the Total Mobility Scheme.

As a result of a nationwide review of Total Mobility in 2005, undertaken by the Ministry of Transport and NZ Transport Agency (NZTA), inconsistencies between regions were found and opportunities for improvement identified.

The review proposed a series of changes, known as Phase 1 and Phase 2, the most significant to the Waikato being:

- Extension of the scheme to qualifying children;
- Extension of the scheme to those in rest homes;
- Extension of the scheme to those with temporary impairments (six months or more);
- Removal of the town boundary restriction; and
- Addition of a maximum fare subsidy.

The Waikato Regional Public Transport Plan 2011-2021 (RPTP) acknowledged a desire to adopt the changes proposed as Phase 1 and 2. Along with possible extensions of the scheme to other centres WRC wanted to wait until a suitable electronic ticketing system was found, as this would reduce the administrative burden and therefore costs to both the funders and users of the scheme.

Recent discussion on a national integrated Total Mobility solution has lead WRC to make a decision that it should no longer wait for electronic ticketing for it to move to Phase 1 and 2.

TDG wrote an implementation report to provide advice on the issues, impacts and implementation of moving the current Total Mobility scheme, as provided in Hamilton, Taupo and Tokoroa, through to Phases 1 and 2. WRC especially required advice on the likely financial impact of the outcome, as the movement to Phase 2 should not exceed current WRC budgetary commitments.

COLLABORATION

Project Collaboration

For the purposes of the Total Mobility Review the project team decided at the initial project meeting that collaboration was to be viewed as:

"Working together to achieve a goal, or in particular, two or more people / organisations working together to achieve shared goals”

The specific intention of using a collaborative approach was the importance of representation of each agency responsible for delivery of TM in the review. The project team (comprising of TDG and WRC members) sought to confirm that moving to Phase 1 and 2 was a goal shared by all stakeholders, and importantly, that all stakeholders agreed to the importance of working together to achieve the goal. The project was therefore heavily reliant on collaboration to succeed.

TM Collaboration

Recognising the collaborative nature of the provision of TM in the review, close consultation over four stages, was required with representatives of all agencies involved.
It was also recognised that in the different TM areas within the Waikato, the organisations responsible for delivering the scheme collaborated between themselves in different ways. Therefore it was important to recognise this and alter the consultation techniques used accordingly in the different Waikato regions that provide TM.

**THE PROJECT**

**Project Team**

The close working relationship between TDG and the WRC was very effective. Ben Barlow (WRC) worked in close collaboration with both Rachel Blewden and Russell Turnbull (the two main representatives for the project from TDG).

This collaboration allowed for a combination of experience levels and skills in order to achieve the best outcome possible.

**Stakeholders**

**Government Agencies**

The biggest stakeholder in the project, other than WRC, TDC and SWDC who provide the local funding share, is NZTA, who provide the remaining funding for the TM scheme. It is stated in the Waikato Regional Public Transport Plan 2011-2021 that:

“Council will continue to work with the NZ Transport Agency and territorial authorities to investigate full implementation of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the scheme (Waikato Regional Council, 2011).”

With the change to Phases 1 and 2 the funding assistance rate provided by NZTA increases from 40% to 60% and therefore NZTA needs to be confident that the increased investment is going to be managed efficiently. In addition, and conversely, NZTA are the drivers behind the need to advance to Phases 1 and 2. Hence, they want to progress these changes and see that Phase 2 is implemented throughout the country giving national consistency.

The other major local authorities that were consulted with throughout the four stages (explained in the following section) were SWDC and TDC. These councils manage the budget for the TM schemes in Tokoroa and Taupo respectively, so need to be assured that the changes and possible increase in the number of TM users will not exceed their council budgets.

**Assessment Agencies**

TM users can be assessed by any agency in their region that offers TM assessments; usually not-for-profit community agencies.

In Hamilton there are multiple agencies which offer TM assessments with proportionally fewer in Taupo and Tokoroa. For the review a representative sample of the agencies were chosen. Life Unlimited in Hamilton, Tokoroa Council of Social Services (TCOSS) and South Waikato Pacific Island Community Services (SWPICS) were chosen to be consulted with during the four phases.

All other assessment agencies in the Waikato Region were informed of the review with a letter asking them for their feedback. The review was explained as were the changes that would occur with the introduction of Phases 1 and 2. Within the letter all agencies were asked to submit their feedback as part of the review. Subsequent to receiving the letter Age Concern in Taupo requested a meeting with the WRC to discuss some potential issues they saw with the proposed implementation. No other feedback was received.
Transportation Providers

Several organisations provide the subsidised taxi fares to TM users. In Hamilton Co-op Taxis, Red Cabs and TRIKISO provide TM services. Tokoroa and Taupo are covered by Tokoroa Taxis, Taupo Taxis, and Great Lake Taxis respectively.

Red Cabs and Tokoroa Taxis were chosen to be directly involved in the consultation phases as representatives of the industry; other taxi operators were consulted with via a letter outlining the project and asking for feedback as with the assessment agencies. We also offered to meet any of the transport providers if they required.

THE REVIEW PROCESS

In order to efficiently manage the project it was divided into four key stages; the initial consultation, second round of consultation, presentation of the implementation plan and the final feedback stage. The four stages ensured that:

- Nothing essential to the project was omitted or mislaid as all items from each preceding stage were closed out before moving on to the next stage.
- At the completion of each stage progress was recorded by using a simple ‘tick box’ system.

The four phases are explained in further detail below.

Stage One - Initial Consultation

Background research was undertaken in order to fully understand the context of the Total Mobility Scheme and in particular how it operates in the Waikato.

In order to get a first-hand idea of how the scheme operates in the Waikato, consultation was carried out with a representative group of key TM stakeholders in the Waikato region.

The initial round of consultation meetings were held with representatives from TDG, WRC and the stakeholder organisations. The need to advance to Phases 1 and 2 was explained to the stakeholders and the reasoning behind the changes. A hand-out which explained the key changes was given to the stakeholders for their information and in order for them to also share the information with the rest of their organisation. During the meeting the stakeholders were asked for feedback on areas they liked or disliked about the current scheme and for any feedback they might have on the proposed changes associated with Phase 1 and 2. They were also encouraged to contact Rachel if any additional feedback was thought of later or if colleagues had any feedback.

The majority of the other regions in New Zealand have already advanced to Phase 2 so in order to get the best possible feedback these regions were also contacted. Each regional council was asked a series of structured questions about how they went about the changes and what differences were noted after the changes. Examples of some of the questions are:

- When did you move to Phase 1 and 2?
- How did the process go? What learning’s can you pass on?
- If you use agencies, what do they do?
- What types of transport provider, apart from taxis, do you use and how?
- Have the changes to child and residential care members been difficult in any way?
- Has the management of temporary TM members provided any challenges?
- How are voucher books distributed? Are they rationed, and if yes, how?
- How have maximum fares been calculated?
- Can you please provide copies of any contract and other documentation you use?
All of the feedback and gathered information was collated and used to identify gaps between the current level of provision and Phase 2 targets (gap analysis).

Stage Two - Second Round of Consultation
The same representative group of key stakeholders from Stage One were consulted with again in a series of meetings in order to present the gap analysis. Additional feedback from these meetings was recorded. Once again stakeholders were given a hand-out of information to take away which included the gap analysis table. The additional feedback was then used and incorporated into writing the draft implementation plan.

Stage Three - Presentation of the Implementation Plan
The draft implementation plan was presented to WRC for their feedback. Once their feedback had been incorporated the plan was then presented to the same group of stakeholders.

The implementation plan included:

- A list of options with the recommendations presented for various aspects of the project;
- A risk analysis;
- Effects on stakeholders with specific sections for each different group of organisations; and
- A proposed timeline that included dates for each stage of implementation, and the goals clearly set out for the implementation plan. A target date was agreed to implement the new phases at the beginning of the next financial year (1st July 2013).

Stage Four - Final Feedback
The final stage of the project included combining all the final feedback into the implementation plan.

EXTERNAL RESEARCH

As part of the post project review, research was undertaken into efficient consultation techniques, particularly in respect to community organisations and why people often resist change. We wanted to compare the consultation techniques used during the project with what research suggests as ‘best practice’ in order to identify how appropriate and successful the consultation process was. Two of the most relevant research documents found are described in more detail.

Ready Reference Engagement Guide, NZ Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector 2011

Background
The New Zealand Government Ready Reference Engagement Guide - Supporting Government Agencies To Engage Effectively With Citizens And Communities, has been put together to help those working with communities learn about organising consultation processes, working in partnership, and building trusting relationships. The guide can also be used as a checklist for those experienced in community consultation.

This reference document was checked for appropriate guidelines against the processes used in the project.
Building Relationships

The guide recommends that the first step towards effective community engagement is building strong relationships. Building strong and effective relationships are important to:

- Draw the wisdom of a wider audience into your work;
- Spread knowledge of your role and interests;
- Enhance your understanding of the needs and views of citizens and communities;
- Build the trust needed to work together collaboratively; and
- Ensure you have networks to draw on when tricky issues need tackling.

To foster these relationships based on trust, respect and mutual understanding:

- Invest time in developing relationships with key individuals;
- Be friendly, polite and approachable;
- Listen well to understand their interests and concerns;
- Communicate clearly and honestly;
- Recognise the pressures and issues they are experiencing;
- Be aware of any perceived power differences between you; and
- Keep any commitments you make.

Project Planning

The document sets out guidelines for the initial project planning and suggests identifying objectives, deliverables, milestones, timeframes, costs and the project team. It suggests clarifying:

- The outcomes you are seeking;
- The scope of the issues to be addressed; and
- The nature and extent of citizen and community involvement.

Stakeholder Identification

When identifying the relevant stakeholders for the project, consider:

- Whether the issues are of wide interest to many citizens, or of primary interest to particular audiences; and
- Which stakeholders are likely to have a strong impact/influence on the issue?

The stakeholders with the highest level of interest/impact generally require the most time and effort.

Levels of Engagement

The suggested levels of engagement are:

- Inform citizens of decisions made with minimal input;
- Consult with citizens before making decisions;
- Collaborating and partnering for joint decisions; and
- Supporting developed decision making.

The guide also provides checklists that could be helpful in any public consultation project.
Turning Resistance into Support, Rick Maurer 2009

Rick Maurer, a renowned change management consultant and author suggests that there are “three levels of resistance to change”, these are:

1. I Don’t Get It;
2. I Don’t Like It; and
3. I Don’t Like You.

Level 1 – I Don’t Get It

Level 1 can occur when people don’t have enough information, disagree with the information or data presented, have a lack of exposure to the critical information or are confused by what it all means.

One mistake that people often do during consultation is to treat all levels of resistance like Level 1 and simply keep offering more and more information to try and get those who are resisting to come around.

How to turn resistance into support – Make your case:

- Make sure you explain why the changes are happening before you explain how;
- Explain in language your audience will understand. Make sure you research the people / organisation you are consulting with first and predict their level of knowledge or skill in the area; and
- Find multiple ways to make your case as people can take things in differently. For example explain things using text, pictures, graphs and conversation.

Level 2 – I Don’t Like It

Level 2 is more of an emotional response when people get upset or angry about the changes due to deeper or more personal reasons. This level of resistance often brings about emotional responses in people, and therefore it can be harder to communicate with these people.

A Level 2 response is often brought on by fear, someone could be afraid of losing face, status, control or even their job.

Often we do not encourage people to respond emotionally so they will ask polite questions about Level 1 issues which can make you feel like they are on the same page as you. Sometimes they will be hoping that you will read between the lines and respond to their fears or in some cases they might not even realise they are operating on this emotional level.

How to turn resistance into support – Remove fear and increase excitement about the positives:

- Make sure to emphasise what is in it for them;
- Get them engaged in the process;
- Be honest – if the change will hurt them in some way tell the truth. This will avoid any rumours spreading and will help to bolster trust.

Level 3 – I Don’t Like You

In some cases the person you are trying to consult with may not like you or trust you because of a previous incident with you or perhaps the company which you represent.
How to turn resistance into support – Rebuild damaged relationships and tend to neglected relationships:

- Take responsibility for things that may have led to the current tense relations.
- Keep commitments and demonstrate you are trustworthy.
- Find ways to spend time together so they get to know you better. Especially if it is the company you represent that they resent, not you.
- Allow yourself to be influenced by the people who resist you. This does not mean you have to give in to all demands but you can admit you have been wrong or that their ideas are worth considering.

KEY LEARNINGS

During the review process multiple lessons were discovered and observed. The importance of collaboration was reinforced in many ways and these are described below.

Importance of Collaboration in Consultation

Collaboration during this project has been important to ensure that the desired outcome is delivered on time. As reinforced in the Ready Reference Engagement Guide (The Office for the Community & Voluntary Sector, 2011) an essential part of project planning is reinforcing scope and timelines to stakeholders.

From Day One key stakeholders were identified and invited to participate. A significant effort was made to ensure that all stakeholders knew what had to be achieved, what each group was responsible for, and their role within the project. Clear timelines were communicated and updated at each meeting to ensure progress was shared with all involved. Also working closely with the various stakeholders allowed us to interact and develop achievable milestones and ideas as a group.

Effective communication and collaboration allowed us to create an environment that was constructive and was inclusive of everyone involved. In other projects that we have been involved with, key stakeholders were not always engaged early enough in the project. This can result in the stakeholders being reticent from the initial stage of the project as they felt not included.

When stakeholders do not feel involved barriers can develop that can potentially impact on the ability to achieve the desired goal. As stated in the Ready Reference Engagement Guide the first stage in the consultation process is to ensure that all stakeholders were aware of the project and why the decisions have been made. This can be done with minimal effort such as an advertisement in the local paper or a detailed letter outlining the project. Even before the review began, the benefits were well signalled to key stakeholders at the annual Waikato TM meeting and via council plans and strategic documents. This also reinforces Rick Maurer’s suggestion about enforcing the positives of the project and always explaining why before how.

A potential issue regarding the implementation of the project was identified during a stakeholder meeting in one of the regions. One of the assessment agencies was not happy about the possible increase of assessments they might have to carry out and wanted to be paid for all assessments done (where previously they had not). Recognising the need for collaborative delivery of TM, and the need for all agencies to be in agreement, additional consultation meetings were held in this area in order to better understand the issues and come to an agreement on a way forward.
One of the issues was not about the project itself but about the organisation involved, specifically the regional council (WRC). The representatives from the assessment agency were reticent towards the WRC representative. On this basis the agency seemed negative towards any suggestions. Holding an additional meeting allowed extra time for them to get to know the WRC representative as a person and not just a faceless council bureaucrat - as suggested by Rick Maurer as a good technique when this issue arises. Also having an independent consultant to present the information with the WRC representative helped assure them that there was a real need for the changes not just WRC wanting to change things for unclear reasons.

In addition, collaboration between TDG and WRC also played a part in identifying areas for administration efficiency improvements. The project therefore also added value to the council by identifying long term TM operational benefits.

What Went Well and Why

This project was generally treated positively by the key stakeholders involved as it was helping people in the community that had issues with mobility and this was voiced to us during the process by those we consulted with. This was evident with Taupo District Councillors and staff who were incredibly supportive of helping their community become more mobile. The success could be marked largely down to the amount of initial consultation that was carried out.

The importance of face-to-face consultation through meetings was shown by the vast amounts of useful feedback received during the meetings with the representative key stakeholders. We found that the meetings were far more successful than sending out letters in terms of receiving feedback. From all of the letters sent out only one response was received whereas at least one piece of useful feedback that was used in the review in some way was received from each meeting we carried out.

We were able to use the Bay Of Plenty, Hawkes Bay, Otago and Taranaki regions as real life examples of where a successful Phase 1 and 2 implementation had recently occurred. These regions were able to provide examples of contract templates and resources that they had used in their implementation project. The use of examples to emphasise your point was not referred to as such in the research but it tends to reinforce Rick Maurer’s emphasis of providing information in different ways as people take things in and understand things in different ways.

Assessment agencies and local councils were supportive of entering into a formal agreement that will clearly identify each stakeholder’s role in delivering the TM scheme. Currently only taxi providers have formal written contracts with the Regional Council (WRC). New contracts will give stakeholders accountability in their respective area of delivery of the scheme. Achieving this important agreement was the result of the more trusting relationships developed through face-to-face consultation.

Barriers Encountered That Were Overcome

Implementation of Phases 1 and 2 includes an increase in the amount of people who will be eligible for the scheme. Key stakeholders were very receptive and supportive to these changes. However SWDC and TDC were concerned about how an increase in the number of people eligible for the scheme might require an increase in the amount of funding required. It was therefore important to approach these aspects in different ways when talking to the different organisations. When discussing budget issues with the councils, reference was made to the other regions in New Zealand that were consulted with. The majority of the stakeholders were reassured when they heard that none of these regions had incurred any noticeable financial increases with the changes.
However, one stakeholder struggled to accept that the scheme could be implemented with next to no additional cost to their existing budgets. This was overcome with a comprehensive presentation at a Council Workshop. The tools available to manage budgets were presented at the council meeting and with discussion; reassurance was provided on the low risk nature of the project. This reinforces the need to present information in a variety of ways to ensure that it is properly understood.

Another example of the importance of presenting information in different ways is how this project uncovered how little some key stakeholders knew about what each various organisation did in the delivery of TM in their respective regions. Diagrams were developed and presented to all the stakeholders to help clarify / outline the TM collaboration process, highlighting each organisations role in delivery for each area.

What Did Not Go Well and Why

As mentioned earlier, one of the community organisations became “side tracked’ at times with issues that were unrelated to the Total Mobility scheme. This particular community was frustrated by the fact that no public bus service was provided by WRC in their town. This community was also very passionate about discussing historical issues that had no relevance to the implementation of Phases 1 and 2. This resulted in a communication barrier between the organisation and the Council representative. Additional meetings were held to try and alleviate these issues but the first meetings held were tense and led to extra work in response.

The letters sent out to the organisations not consulted with face-to-face did not return a high level of feedback with only one response received. This could be viewed as a positive result, however, since we used a large amount of the information we gathered during consultation to carry out the review and decide on the best way to implement the new phases and there is the risk that a large portion of the TM scheme is not implemented in a way that works best in that region. There was no real science when it came to picking which organisations we would consult with face-to-face in each region. No transport providers or assessment agencies were consulted with face-to-face in Taupo.

This project did highlight some real inconsistencies in how the TM scheme is administered in the region. This was of considerable concern, so under the new scheme there will be a significant amount of standardised training for assessors, drivers and assessment agencies which will help rectify inconsistencies. This emphasises the need to build relationships within the community and all stakeholders and ensure appropriate initial project planning. Investigation during the initial consultation meetings with stakeholders highlighted that some current users of the scheme may not strictly be eligible for the vouchers. One assessment agency even admitted issuing vouchers to people that may not have necessarily qualified against the strict criteria of the scheme. Service issues were highlighted during several meetings.

Taxi providers were not always passing on relevant information to their drivers. e.g. TM allows for expired identification cards to be accepted until further notice but it was reported that some taxi drivers were refusing travel to those with expired cards.

During some of the meetings issues arose in terms of dealing with other cultures. One particular meeting did not go well as we proposed a method for future implementation that they found challenging as it went against their way of living. This resulted in them being very defensive to all of the other information presented at that particular meeting.

Some agencies did not agree with the maximum fare that was proposed for their region. However when they were presented with actual numbers gathered from a typical passenger they better understood why that figure had been recommended.
What We Would Do Better Next Time

Upon reviewing the TM project and the relevant research we have identified several key areas that could be done differently if a project of similar nature was to be undertaken in the future.

One thing would be to encourage all meetings minutes and hand-outs (or a summary of) be circulated within the relevant organisation so staff are kept up-to-date with progress in the project. It was found during the project that sometimes the information presented at the consultation meetings was not fed back to the appropriate staff within the organisation. It was a concern when some senior managers had no knowledge of the TM review that was underway. Something else we would do would be to copy appropriate managers into any relevant correspondence within the affected organisations.

We would hold more face-to-face meetings with a better representation of the TM organisations and make sure that at least one organisation from each region was met with face-to-face. The letters we sent out could also be followed up with a phone call in order to get the most feedback out of the process as possible.

Furthermore, as described above some of the community agencies consulted with had quite different reactions to the proposed changes although they were consulted with in the same way as all the other stakeholders. In any similar future reviews, more initial research into dealing with community agencies and in particular with agencies representing diverse cultures would be recommended. Although the project was successful one of the major issues that occurred was in regards to dealing with other cultures. Being sensitive to different approaches to proposed changes would have provided better long term results. Specifically, more time could have been invested in specific meetings, getting to know the stakeholders and explaining even more background into why the changes are happening instead of launching straight into how it will affect them.
RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the TM implementation project and the subsequent research review it was found that the TM review project could be identified as a good example of a successful consultation project with few issues.

Therefore we have identified an approach towards multi-agency consultation which proved to be successful for our project and could be applied to similar projects.

Step One - Identify All Stakeholders and Give Early Information
Make sure all the possible stakeholders are identified. Aim for as much face-to-face consultation as possible.

Provide a brief overview of why the project is occurring at the very start of the project or before the project begins if possible.

Give stakeholders plenty of notice before meetings and be flexible about where the meeting is held and when.

Make time to build the relationship. Recognise when specific groups need additional time to build confidence.

Step Two - Consult with Key Stakeholders

Face-to-face consultation via meetings is always better. However the balance between the time it takes to hold multiple meetings and the amount of valuable information gained from the meetings needs to be made in order to get the best value-for-money out of the project.

Whilst a representative sample of key stakeholders may be met face-to-face, all others should be consulted via a mixture of media, such as advertisement, a letter or where beneficial a phone call / video conference, to capture the most value out of a face-to-face meeting.

Present information in a variety of ways including written, visual presentations, oral and hand outs that can be reviewed at a later stage if required by the stakeholder. The use of social media could be considered.

Step Three - Collaborate and Make Decisions

Use all of the feedback gained from the initial rounds of consultation to inform key decisions.

Complete a gap analysis in order to identify any gaps that exist from the information gathered. Identify the areas where information is required and make this a priority for the next round of consultation.

Use this additional feedback to make final decisions.

Step Four - Support Decisions and Resolve Issues

Follow through with the decisions made and complete the final project outcomes.

Make sure that all information and issues presented during consultation are considered, and if an issue cannot be addressed allow extra time to follow it up with the stakeholder. Making sure to always follow up with a stakeholder will build trust.
CONCLUSION

Considering our own internal review and a comparison against the literature research we confirmed that our project approach to consultation was largely suitable for a multi-agency project which requires each agency to understand, support and contribute to the delivery of a successful outcome. Where we encountered issues with resistance to our collaboration efforts, we could have better approached the agencies concerned by spending more time building the relationship before discussing any potential changes to the scheme.

REFERENCES


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