

WHAT IS CONSULTATION?

**‘Gathering views, ideas or information to share
or inform decision making’**

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is the process of involving people in the decisions that affect them.

How is this different?

Community engagement is a longer term activity – not just a one off event. It is a two way process in which those leading the activity and the public develop a working relationship.

Community engagement asks participants to take an active part in decision making rather than simply offering their views. Of course this process relies on on-going and effective communication between those leading the process and the public.

Community engagement is underpinned by community empowerment values. In other words, through their active engagement in the process, the public takes on some of the power (and responsibility) for decision making and action in their own communities. In doing so, it is hoped that the outcomes will meet local needs and aspirations and that better use is made of limited resources.

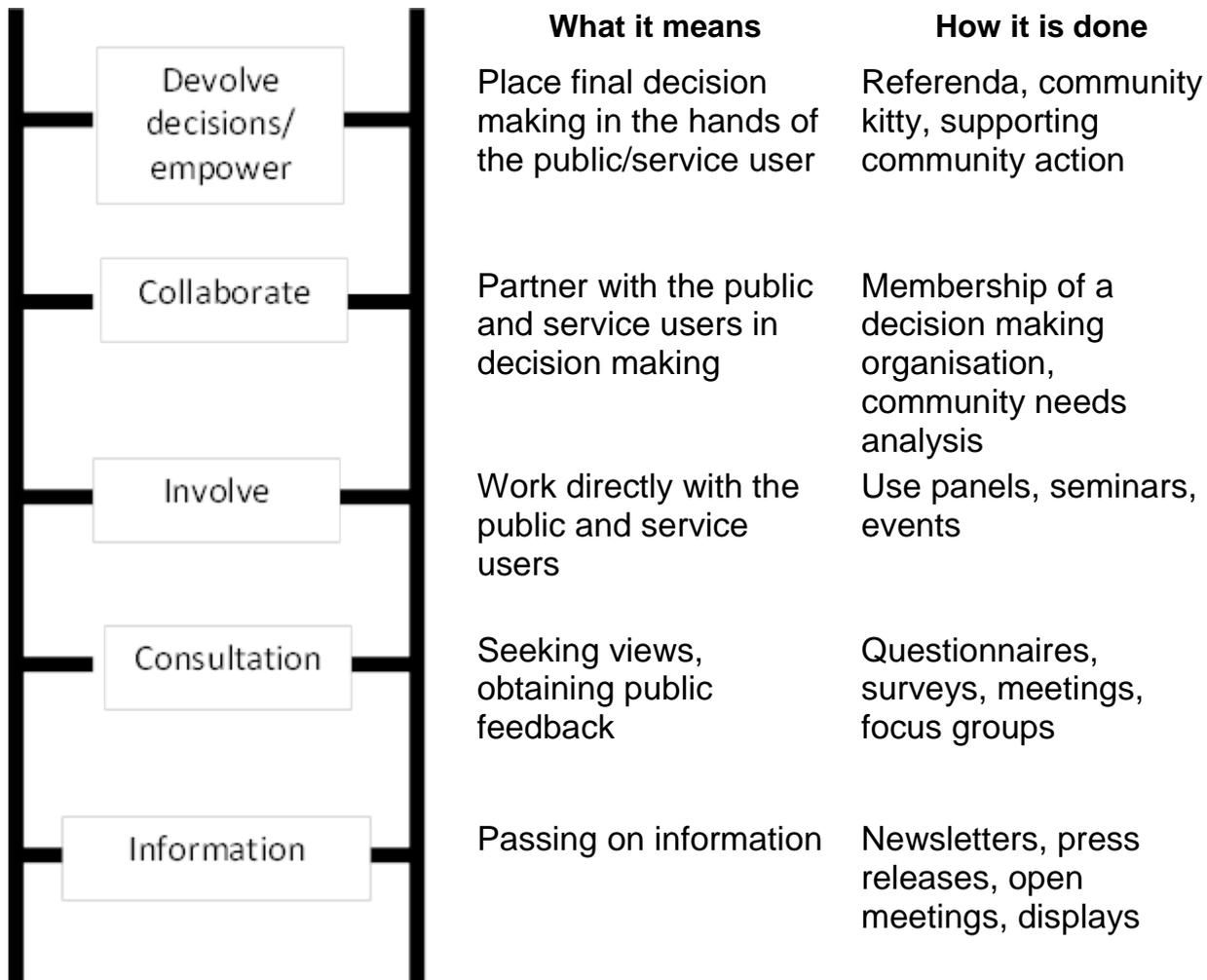
By becoming involved, the community is more likely to feel a sense of ownership over the outcomes. If so, they are also more likely to become more actively involved in taking these issues forward. By getting actively involved, this can build local skills and capacity. This can result in stronger communities that are more able to respond to challenges.

So what are we doing?

Before embarking on a community consultation or engagement exercise, it is important to be clear about your objectives - what level of participation you are seeking and how much real involvement you are offering. Community consultation and engagement exercises can easily break down when each party to the relationship has a different understanding and expectation of the level of participation involved. Different methods may be involved, depending on the level of participation desired.

Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

Think about where your project might sit on Arnstein's Ladder of Participation.



Sherry Arnstein: *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* (1969).

Further information

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