

Guide to Inclusive Communications & Engagement

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1. Introduction



1.1 Melbourne Water's commitment to diverse and inclusive engagement

Melbourne Water is committed to working with the community to enhance the life and liveability of Greater Melbourne. Central to this is a commitment to put customers and community at the heart of everything we do. One way we are achieving this is through our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2020 – 2025). This strategy encourages us to deliver a more diverse and inclusive Melbourne Water through influencing how we attract, retain and develop our people, fostering a flexible and inclusive culture, and through ensuring diversity and inclusion is integrated into how we engage with and provide services to our community.

Melbourne Water is connecting with its customers and communities every day. Whether that be through its delivery of services and capital works or developing and implementing new strategies, plans, programs and other initiatives. All communities have the right to participate in these activities, regardless of age, gender, cultural identity, religion, sexuality, or physical ability. This right is enshrined in Victorian Government legislation, strategies, and policies (see section 8).

While Melbourne Water is a recognised industry leader in engagement, it is also committed to continuous improvement. This guide will strengthen its approach to delivering diverse and inclusive communications and engagement across all interactions with the community and stakeholders. By embracing diversity we will gain a better understanding of and engagement with the people we work with and the communities in which we work.

1.2 Purpose of the Guide

The practice of engagement is constantly evolving, as is our community. This guide will support and inspire Melbourne Water to consistently understand and respect the breadth of diversity of our customers and community and embed practice that legitimately engages all, not just the loudest voices. We can do this by being aware of and removing barriers that many of our communities' face when participating in engagement.

The Guide includes overarching principles for inclusive communications and engagement and a minimum standard for Melbourne Water's communications and engagement practice. It won't always act as a playbook of when to do what and how but instead provide a range of approaches to make communications and engagement more accessible and to reach a greater diversity of participants.

Targeted engagement approaches have been suggested for a sample of community cohorts Melbourne Water typically experiences barriers in engaging with.

It is important to note that the Guide does not promote one approach being better or easier than the other. Instead, decisions around accessibility and inclusion should be driven by community needs and preferences.

1.3 How to use the Guide

Use this guide alongside Melbourne Water's Communications and Engagement Planning tools and supporting resources at key stages of design and delivery.

Project scoping

Determine the effort and resources required to deliver inclusive engagement and identify the project-specific cohorts that need to be reached through the engagement.

Community profiling and stakeholder analysis

Determine the profile of the community catchment for your project and consider the approaches in this guide to help remove barriers to participation for your target audiences/key stakeholders.

Communications

Craft your content to be inclusive and to ensure you are reaching and attracting representation from your target audiences.

Setting key messages

Consider your target audiences/key stakeholders and how your key messages can support greater inclusion and accessibility through the language you use and values based messaging.

Engagement methods

Design your engagement to be inclusive and actively reach the diversity of your target audiences/key stakeholders identified. Provide tailored approaches and support where needed to ensure diverse groups can participate in your engagement activities.

Evaluation

Capture what you have learnt by evaluating who you have reached and seeking feedback from your diverse participants to share and help refine your engagement over time.

1.4 Overview of the Guide

This guide is made up of the following key components

1

Overarching principles for inclusive engagement:

The principles that should guide all activities relating to communications and engagement at Melbourne Water, and why it is so important to ensure a diversity and inclusion lens is applied at all times.

2

Designing and delivering inclusive communications:

Minimum requirements, tips and techniques for ensuring communications are accessible for all

3

Designing and delivering inclusive engagement activities: Minimum requirements, tips and techniques for designing and delivering engagement activities to reach diverse communities and to ensure they are inclusive.

2. Overarching principles for inclusive communications and engagement






The following 10 universal engagement principles have been adopted to guide effective and inclusive communications and engagement for Melbourne Water projects. These principles are sourced from the Essential Services Commission report on *Sensitive and appropriate engagement with consumers experiencing vulnerability 2021* and were based research into best practice.

Tip:

The principles will be helpful in the scoping stage of a project to set the scene for project teams and provide minimum inclusive communications and engagement expectations.



Melbourne Water's 10 universal engagement principles

Principle ¹					
	 <p>1. Be inclusive</p> <p>Adapt your standard communications and engagement approaches to include all community members. Develop a range of techniques that are suitable for the diverse characteristics and needs of the community.</p>	 <p>2. Collaborate and co-design with community and stakeholders</p> <p>Develop communication and engagement strategies, plans and techniques in consultation, partnership or co-design with community. This builds trust and buy-in, and is more likely to lead to diverse and representative participation in engagement. As 'experts by experience', community can also play a valuable role in facilitating or supporting engagement activities.</p>	 <p>3. Treat engagement as an ongoing process based on relationships</p> <p>Engagement will be effective and appropriate where it is supported by strong relationships with the community. Relationships and networks can help identify issues, recruit the right participants, and design appropriate and accessible engagement processes. Developing honest and trust-based relationships requires time and resources.</p>	 <p>4. Have a clear purpose</p> <p>Understand and clearly explain, why you want to engage with the community. Consider matters including the required level of engagement with the community, the information or other input you require, the desired outcomes and who you should engage with.</p>	 <p>5. Reflect community diversity</p> <p>Make sure engagement participants represent the diversity of the community and customers. This will ensure you hear representative and reliable perspectives. Develop a sophisticated understanding of the consumer community, its interests and needs. Acknowledge and value difference, and remember that one person cannot speak for all members of their community.</p>
What this means for stakeholders	Stakeholders feel welcomed and safe to participate and feel they have appropriate access to participation.	Stakeholders have the appropriate access to participation to express their preferences and feel valued.	Stakeholders have a strong sense of trust in the organisation and in the process. Stakeholders know their role and are actively involved throughout the engagement lifecycle.	Stakeholders have a clear understanding of why they are being engaged and what it will influence.	Stakeholders are engaged in a culturally safe way and not burdened with representing their whole cohort.

Melbourne Water's 10 universal engagement principles

Principle ¹					
	 <p>6. Invest in engagement</p> <p>Effective universal engagement is only possible with the investment of time and resources. This includes resources to facilitate the community's participation (such as travel costs, childcare, and remuneration of time spent) and adequate resources to design engagement activities that are appealing, appropriate and accessible for a broad range of consumers.</p>	 <p>7. Be transparent and offer genuine involvement</p> <p>Give all community who are involved in engagement equal access to decision-makers and a genuine opportunity to influence outcomes. Recognise and acknowledge the expertise of community and ensure that all engagement processes are accessible and appropriate. Be honest and transparent about the influence that community will and do have over decisions and processes. Publicly report on the influence of input on final outcomes.</p>	 <p>8. Show respect for individuals, their knowledge and expertise</p> <p>Ensure all interactions with community are founded on respect for their contributions, expertise, circumstances, and needs. Use respectful language, offer multiple and diverse opportunities to participate, seek and respond to feedback, acknowledge and deal with disagreements or mistakes, and challenge biases.</p>	 <p>9. Use methods that are universal and flexible</p> <p>Design communications and engagement with a wide diversity of consumers in mind. Build considerations like accessibility, cultural awareness, cultural safety, adequate resourcing, and comfort and flexibility of timing and approach into every engagement process. Ask potential and actual participants what they need and ensure you have the resources and flexibility to provide it.</p>	 <p>10. Reflect, adapt, improve</p> <p>Invite, and act on, feedback from community involved in engagement processes. Establish clear processes for participants to ask questions and give feedback during engagement and respond and adapt where necessary. Conduct formal evaluation to assess whether the stated aims and principles of the engagement were met</p>
What this means for stakeholders	Stakeholders feel their time is valued and involvement respected through a well-planned and resourced process.	Stakeholders have a clear understanding of how their involvement and input has been considered and influenced the final outcome.	Stakeholders feel respected and valued through positive interactions with Melbourne Water.	Stakeholders are supported to participate in the way that suits them.	Stakeholders have increased trust and confidence in the organisation when they are given the opportunity to provide feedback and can see that it has been acted on.

3. Stakeholder analysis

As with any communications or engagement project, stakeholder identification and analysis are a key first step.



3.1 Identifying stakeholders

It is important to identify all groups and individuals within the community who will be affected or have an interest in the decision being made. People, attitudes, ideas and perceptions are not static, and neither are stakeholders – they will emerge and evolve throughout the engagement process.

To develop a comprehensive list of stakeholders consider undertaking the following activities:

- brainstorm with a cross section of the project team and other Melbourne Water teams that have worked in this community.
- reach out to key stakeholders who have a deep understanding of the community such as local Council or local champions.

3.2 Understanding the community

For most projects, community will be a key stakeholder to consider and often be at the centre of communication and engagement planning.

Develop a community profile for your project to ensure the latest insights and demographics are understood for that community.

This will help determine the target community audiences for your project and inform the communication channels and engagement methods you choose to use.

Tip:

Knowing who your target audiences are for a project and meeting their participation needs effectively can be often be better than trying to engage everyone in the community all at once.

To profile the community for your project consider:

- the extent of your community catchment – who is impacted or has an interest in the project
- key demographic data. At a minimum, consider the following demographic indicators:
 - gender
 - age
 - country of birth
 - language spoken at home
 - English proficiency (speaking, reading/writing)
 - income levels
 - education levels
 - digital inclusion index
- previous engagement insights and experiences
- existing community insights
- historical, political, linguistic and socio-economic contexts of the community

3.2 (Continued)

Do your research on how people want to access information and be engaged

Think about how your target audiences prefer to receive information and participate in engagement. Ways you can find this out include:

- ask the community how they want to be engaged before you start your engagement program: this is a core IAP2 value and in the case of diverse cohorts, their engagement preferences can be very specific and difficult to determine without asking
- review engagement research insights
- review past engagement activities or projects: refer to engagement reports, lessons learned notes or reach out to the team that delivered the project to hear what worked well (and what didn't)
- reach out to networks that work with your target audience: this may be Local Government, community leaders or advocacy groups. Talk to them about what works best for the communities they work with.

3.3 Identifying stakeholder barriers

Identifying barriers people may experience requires participation from a range of people who have connected with those stakeholders before and are connected to the project in the community. Again, reach out to the local Council and other key internal and external stakeholders who can provide insights.

As part of your stakeholder analysis, brainstorm the barriers stakeholders are likely to experience and ideas for how to overcome these through the design of the engagement.

Common barriers people experience when participating in engagement include:

- 1 **time, for example, based on carer responsibilities or work requirements**
- 2 **knowledge or ability to digest complex information**
- 3 **language, for example, where English may be a second, third or even fourth language**
- 4 **distance and transport access, including where there may be a financial barrier to participation**
- 5 **confidence**

- 6 **lack of culturally safe practices or spaces**
- 7 **accessibility, for example where temporary and permanent disability requirements are not considered**
- 8 **socio-economic factors**
- 9 **factors associated with new migrant settlement**
- 10 **consultation fatigue**

3.4 Cultural safety and intersectionality

Cultural safety

To deliver a truly inclusive approach, engaging in a culturally safe manner is critical.

A culturally safe and secure environment is one where people feel safe and draw strengths in their identity, culture and community.²

The best way to provide cultural safety is to talk to people who identify and work closely with the cultures in the community you are working within.

Self-determined engagement is a key part of this. During the very early planning stage, consider how you seek out, understand and design your approach to meet the needs and preferences as expressed by your target audiences.

Intersectionality

In recognising and celebrating different cultures and identities, it is also important to consider intersectionality, which refers to how the various aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.³

For example, as a human we all have diverse and different lived experiences. You may identify as a woman, but also a woman of colour and with a disability and this can define your experiences.



Resource:

[Short video on intersectionality and GIA](#), Gender Equality Commission (6 mins)

How to approach cultural safety and intersectionality for your project

We can approach intersectionality by applying overarching inclusive communication and engagement methods to all our projects. These are detailed in sections 4 and 5, along with methods that target specific cohorts when necessary.

Other general considerations include:

- think about who the right facilitator is for different cohorts. It may be more appropriate to have a facilitator that the participants can identify with.
- consider carefully how you use and talk about 'target cohorts', acknowledging intersectionality. For example, if you run a series of focus groups that target different cohorts some participants might find it hard to know which part of their identity they are representing. Opportunities like this should be promoted as important ways to reach diverse cohorts but don't expect people to only talk about their experience as someone who identifies only with that cohort – all parts of their identity are important and valued.

- provide ample time for community members to develop informed views and contribute to decision-making
- offer a buddy opportunity for online events. In face-to-face events participants will often move to be in groups with people they identify with. This is harder to do online so consider offering, as part of the registration, opportunities for people to identify a buddy that they will always be in a breakout room with.

4. Designing and delivering inclusive communications

When developing communications to support engagement you need to consider the variety of needs of your target audiences.

It is important to provide information in a variety of formats and using different communication channels. The suite of communication tools you use should be informed by previous stakeholder insights and acknowledge the diverse preferences of stakeholders. Contact details should be provided if people require information in an alternative format to that provided.



4.1 Minimum requirements to make sure your information is accessible

Accessibility is about everyone having equal access to information and services.

In many cases we have legal obligations that require us to make sure our communications are accessible. For example, the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* requires agencies to ensure people with disability have the same access to information and services as others in the community.

There are specific requirements to support us to deliver accessible communications and minimum accessibility requirements:

- 1 be written in plain English to Grade 8 level or below.
- 2 be as concise as possible.
- 3 use headings and sub-headings to 'signpost' the information and break it up.
- 4 use short paragraphs and keep sentences short (15-25 words max).
- 5 be as legible as possible e.g. for example, using a minimum 14-point text size for printed documents.
- 6 put key information first and detail later.
- 7 use every day words and avoid jargon, wordplay, colloquialisms or phrases with double meanings.
- 8 use an active voice, e.g. 'we decided that' not 'it has been decided that'.
- 9 use inclusive language (see section 4.5 for more detail).
- 10 think about the location of the communications and who will see it. Make sure the messages and images are suitable for a general audience.

- 11 use imagery that includes diverse people, including people of different ages, gender, appearance and backgrounds. It should not portray people in a stereotypical or discriminatory way.
- 12 don't use humour, artworks or historical settings to stereotype people.
- 13 offer to provide information in alternative formats should this be required, and provide a contact for people to follow this offer up. Be ready to be responsive if people do take up this offer.
- 14 if sharing large amounts of information (e.g. pre-reading before a workshop), consider providing an audio recording of the information.



Resources:

[Melbourne Water Writing Style Guide – found in Media Valet](#)

[Accessibility guidelines for government communications | Victorian Government](#)

[How people read | Australian Government Style Manual](#)

[Writing in Plain English Department of Families, Fairness and Housing](#)

[Scope Australia | Plain English or easy English?](#)

4.2 Online accessibility

As a government agency we must comply to the Victorian Government Website Management Framework standard on accessibility, this is Level AA of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1.

We must consider the following when developing online content:

- sufficient colour and contrast
- making images/illustrations/videos accessible, e.g. use of alternative text (alt text)
- making links accessible
- captions and transcripts for videos
- ensuring tables are accessible.

Tip:

Online accessibility is not just about ensuring a vision impaired person can effectively access your online content using a screen reader, good accessibility can be beneficial to everyone.

4.3 Document accessibility

Accessibility requirements for colour and contrast, images, links and tables apply to documents in the same way as they apply to web and intranet pages.

PDF documents (especially graphic design outputs) may not be accessible as many screen reader technology (used by people with a vision impairment people) cannot access and read the content. So it is important to provide an MS Word version of the document if you are creating a PDF.

You should also consider if your document would be better as a webpage.

4.4 Translation

There is not a best practice benchmark for when to translate materials, for example, when 20% of the community speaks another language.

There are a wide number of factors that can influence the need to provide translated materials beyond the percentage of a population that speaks another language. This includes:

- are there any existing media and communication channels for this language cohort?
- is this a community that has high English proficiency?
- is this a community that would be familiar with the project or have a high water literacy level?

However, consider what the impact is on the community if they are not able to read the communication material. If it is high impact, additional effort should be made to communicate in preferred languages. If the impact is low, then the promotion of translation services may be suitable.

At a minimum all communication materials should clearly communicate access to translation services and any interpreters used should be NAATI accredited.

Some of the ways you may want to consider communicating in different languages:

- include 1-2 sentences in the top languages spoken in the community you are working that encourages people to use translation services to learn more.

- consider having 2-sided communication collateral where one is English, and the other side is the dominant other language spoken in that community.
- provide links to versions of the communications material in different languages.
- reach out to community leaders from different cultures who can help to disseminate information in the appropriate language.

Tip:

For events, where you have deemed it necessary to have translation, it is important to pre-brief translators – this significantly enhances the quality of the translation.

At events where people can 'drop-in' there are several options including:

- having translators for dominant community languages present.
- engaging community champions/leaders who can provide support through a buddy system (ensure they are adequately pre-briefed and reimbursed for their time).
- inviting Melbourne Water staff who speak community languages to be involved and available to support.
- having a phone and translation service pre-arranged for on-the-spot translation.



Resources:

The Victorian Government has a range of resources that can help guide decisions around translating materials and the use of translation services.

Effective Translations – Victorian Government Guidelines on Policy and Procedures

Introduction to translation and interpreting | Victorian department of Families, Fairness and Housing

4.5 Inclusive language

How we communicate and the words we use enable a diversity of people (e.g. different ages, cultures, genders) to feel valued and respected and able to contribute.

Use language that ensures everyone feels welcome and that their opinions are welcomed. Below are some tips and examples on how to make the language in your communications inclusive:



Resources:

[Inclusive language | Australian Government Style Manual](#)

[Guide to Inclusive Language | RMIT University](#)

[LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide | Victorian Government](#)

[WordsAtWork - Building inclusion through the power of language | Diversity Council Australia](#)

Inclusive language tip



Promote gender equality through gender-sensitive language.

Examples and suggestions to strengthen inclusion

- use 'good morning everyone', 'welcome friends' rather than 'good morning guys' or 'ladies and gents'.
- promote gender equality through titles, labels and names. For example, use generic terms such as professional, salesclerk, waiter or nurse instead of career woman, salesman, waitress and male nurse.



Don't question or make assumptions about someone's gender, sexuality or relationship

Gender or gender identity is a social construct that creates social expectations as expressed through clothes, physical appearance, and the pronouns that we use. People see themselves as a man, woman, non-binary or with a fluid gender-identity.

- don't assume that everyone is heterosexual.
- use men, women and non-binary, rather than male and female.








Use language that acknowledges that we have diverse relationships and families

Families and relationships vary according to aspects regarding gender, ethnicity, sexuality, marital status, age, and personal dynamics.

- acknowledge that our families come in a rich array of shapes, sizes and relationships.

4.5 Inclusive language

Inclusive language tip	 <p>Use people's names as much as possible and also check what pronoun they prefer.</p>	 <p>LGBTIQ+ is an inclusive acronym that encompasses all minority sexual and gender identities.</p>	 <p>An inclusive term for indigenous Australian is 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples'.⁴</p>	 <p>The choices we all make about language have an impact on the way people with disability feel and are perceived in society.</p>	 <p>The phrase 'culturally and linguistically diverse' (formerly CALD) is a broad term used to describe communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions.</p>
Examples and suggestions to strengthen inclusion	<p>A person's pronouns might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • he/him/his • she/her/hers • they/them/theirs <p>A transgender person, or a person who is of non-binary gender may use the pronouns that best reflect their gender identity; this may not be related to their biological sex.</p>	<p>It can sometimes be a mouthful and some letters may be left off or jumbled.</p> <p>Even though we may refer to it as a singular term, the LGBTIQ+ community is a highly diverse group of individuals from many different backgrounds with distinct histories and experiences. On that note, it is best to use the term "LGBTIQ communities" as there are many different communities within this umbrella term.</p> <p>Alternate umbrella terms that you can use are gender diverse and rainbow community.</p>	<p>Other pluralised terms such as 'First Nations' or 'First Peoples' are also acceptable language, and respectfully encompass the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities.</p>	<p>In Australia, best-practice language is to use 'person with disability' or 'people with disability'.⁵</p> <p>When referring to people with disability, reference a person's disability only when it's relevant. Focus on the person, not the disability.</p>	<p>This term is often used synonymously with the phrase 'ethnic communities', however, culturally and linguistically diverse (we are advised not to shorten to 'CALD'), cultural diversity or multicultural communities are preferred terms used by Australian service providers and agencies.</p>

5. Designing and delivering inclusive engagement activities



5.1 When to implement targeted community cohort engagement tools

You can put in huge amounts of effort to make all your engagement events inclusive. However, the reality is there may still be some cohorts that will hesitate or choose not to participate in open invitation engagement activities. For this reason, it might not always be the best option to have everyone together in one room.

Bringing diverse community members together has many positives, but it can also be challenging and inhibitive for some community members. Certain topics, past experiences and participant biases and perceptions towards different groups can prevent people from participating.

It is important to consider this at the start of your planning, when considering barriers different cohorts may experience. Again, lean on internal stakeholders with experience working with those communities, local community champions and the local Council to help determine the best approaches.

5.2 Accessibility for engagement

You must consider accessibility when hosting engagement events such as workshops, community forums, pop ups, and stakeholder briefings.

Additional supports

When it comes to providing additional supports for community to be able to participate in your events, it is always best to ask them early and budget for this as part of your engagement. You can do this by adding questions to invites and registration forms like:

- “Melbourne Water is committed to ensuring this [event/tour/workshop/training] is accessible for all [employees OR members of our community OR invitees]. If there is anything we can provide to ensure you can participate fully in this [event/tour/workshop/training], please contact [name], [telephone], [email].”
- “what, if any, supports do you need to participate in this engagement activity?”
- “the venue is accessible for people with a physical disability and all handout materials will be available, where possible, in an accessible electronic format. Please (use this form) to let us know if you have any other requirements to enable you to participate fully”

However if you are going to ask the question, you need to be prepared to provide the support. If support isn't available to meet a community need, make sure you are honest about this upfront in your communications e.g. unfortunately childcare is not

available for this workshop however if this means you won't be able to participate, we can arrange to capture your feedback at another time.

The types of additional supports people are likely to request include:

- bringing a carer along with them
- AUSLAN interpreters/translated materials
- transport support
- pre-session briefings to support those that may find it difficult to comprehend or access any pre-reading materials or use the technology
- breaks for prayer times
- dietary requirements
- childcare



Resources:

[Accessible events guideline and checklist | Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing](#)

[Making Events Accessible - Checklist for meetings, conferences, training, and presentations that are remote/virtual, in-person, or hybrid | Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\) | W3C](#)

5.3 Inclusive survey design

One of the common engagement methods used to gather feedback from stakeholders are surveys. There are a number of ways we can make these inclusive and easy to use:

Survey platform choice

The survey platform should be accessible for people with a disability.

Survey platform vendors should be able to tell you if they are compliant to the WCAG 2.1 standard Level AA, which is the standard we need to meet at Melbourne Water. If they can't, that's a warning sign that it's not accessible.

Survey content

The content created and housed within the platform must also be accessible. Create content with accessibility in mind and test for compliance.

Flexibility

Survey questions should allow flexibility in responses. For instance, people can have multiple disabilities or identify as multiple ethnicities.

Multiple selection buttons are better than "either/or" binary selections.

Self-identification

Not everyone will fit into defined categories. Allow people to also self-identify by using a free text box.

Optional by default, mandatory by exception

Only make questions mandatory if they are essential for your data. Some respondents may prefer to not disclose certain information. If you make every question mandatory, you exclude them from your dataset as they won't respond at all.

How to show mandatory status in an accessible form

Include a statement at the top of the survey stating "All questions are optional unless marked as mandatory".

Mark questions that are mandatory with the text (mandatory) at the end of the question text.

The little red asterisk that is commonly used is not accessible. While useful, it should not be relied upon on its own to communicate mandatory status.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) standards

These standards are the groupings, formats and language the ABS use for collecting data. They are a time saver as they tell you exactly how to create your response groupings for form fields around ethnicity, gender, disability, etc.

The groupings and language are professionally researched and tested. An added bonus is if you use these groupings, it makes it easier to do direct comparisons of your data with ABS data such as census results.



Resources:

[Standards | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

[Data collection statement: People matter survey | Victorian Public sector commission – a good example of a plain English easy to ready data collection statement](#)

[Designing Forms | Australian government](#)

5.4 Designing different engagement activities to be inclusive

The following tables brings together a broad range of information that is designed to be easily accessible when designing engagement activities to ensure they are inclusive. The information is structured around the different stakeholder groups who are more likely to experience barriers to engagement, along with the common engagement activities delivered. This means there may be some repetition of information, ideas and references. This guide will evolve over time to include more community cohorts and approaches.



5.4.1 Community events

Community events might include tree planting days, working bees, educational events, open days etc.

Community cohorts

Approaches and techniques for making your community event inclusive

All cohorts

- use plain English in any engagement materials or activities to ensure information is easily understood and interpreted by a wide audience.
- ask others their pronouns and introduce yours when first meeting community. Establishing this creates an inclusive environment from the start. Ensure to use the right pronouns and apologise if you make a mistake.
- avoid language which is derogatory or minimising of a specific individual or group of people.
- be aware of cultural practices and ensure dietary requirements are requested and met.
- provide a key point of contact to ensure community can reach someone should they have any issues.
- consider timing of your event – understand what would best work for your community. For example, an engagement activity at night may not be as suitable as during the day.
- ensure everyone is aware of transport options to get to the venue – how long it will take to drive, or how long it will take via public transport. Provide tram numbers and instructions on how to access the venue.
- use the statement: "Melbourne Water is committed to ensuring this [event/tour/workshop/training] is accessible for all [employees OR members of our community OR invitees]. If there is anything we can provide to ensure you can participate fully in this [event/tour/workshop/training], please contact [name], [telephone], [email]." Examples of supports that can be provided include an Auslan interpreter for deaf participants, a seat at the front of the room.
- include messages that welcome children and older community members to join in.

Young people aged 12-25 years

- use role-plays and models to make education more tangible (e.g. demonstrate how litter ends up in waterways). This could be digital, or you could get participants to create the models.
- promote intergenerational opportunities by connecting with grandparents or older community members who could engage their grandchildren or other children and youth to participate.
- partner with local primary and secondary schools to seek curriculum alignments.
- incorporate interactive games and activities (e.g. the Magical Genie walk as part of engagement for Reimagining Moonee Ponds Creek project).
- seek support and advice from Youth officers at the local Council who are well connected with young people in the local community.



5.4.1 Community events

Community cohorts	Women, men and gender non-binary/gender diverse people	People who identify as LGBTIQ+	People with disability	People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	People experiencing social and economic disadvantage	People aged 65+
Approaches and techniques for making your community event inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be mindful of words or expressions that are commonly used to or about individuals of particular genders, but not others. These can uncover conscious or unconscious biases. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> words like 'shrill' and 'nagging' are commonly used in relation to women, but rarely men words like 'bloke' or 'boys will boys' are commonly used in relation to men, but rarely women descriptions of men as aggressive or violent and women as emotional or passive use language which is appropriate in the circumstances, including for the audience. Avoid strong or obscene language. avoid language which is derogatory or minimising of a specific individual or group of people. promote gender equality through titles, labels and names. For example, use generic terms such as professional, salesclerk, waiter or nurse instead of career woman, salesman, waitress and male nurse. avoid generic nouns and pronouns that exclude either women or men, such as 'mankind' and 'mother tongue.' be mindful of gender-biased language which either implicitly or explicitly favours one gender over another. For example, 'The number of years an engineer will spend training depends on what country he is from.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> targeted branding and promotion using inclusive language and recognised imagery that celebrates inclusion. For example, adding the pride rainbow symbol to collateral, using pronouns on name tags, use gender inclusive language like 'Welcome friends, instead of 'Ladies and Gentlemen.' ask trusted community champions 'what would help you feel safe and welcome?' to help design local approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include information about accessibility of and to the venue in all promotion. This may include maps with locations of disability parking, accessible transport and entry and exit points, be available from venue management. target promotion to include different activities people can participate in on the day based on different abilities, (e.g. getting plants ready for planting add suggested wording i.e. this is an all abilities event, please contact (name) to discuss requirements). include asking for what supports may be required through the registration process including any visibility or hearing aids. ensure you provide appropriate access in relation to seating location, hearing or seeing presentation slides, or handouts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> find, connect and partner with community leaders, organisations and local friends of groups (e.g., the <u>Australian Inter-Cultural Society</u>) a not-for-profit organisation that promotes multiculturalism and fosters intercultural and interfaith dialogue be aware of cultural practices and provide for these practices where necessary, (e.g. providing prayer spaces, separate BBQ for Halal meat, ask for what food options are appropriate, gender safe areas for men/women etc). use QR codes to link to different language translations. include translations of key messages in promotional material if you are aware of the cultural diversity of target audiences (e.g. a high proportion of Vietnamese speakers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider how people will be able to travel to the event and promote low-cost transport options i.e. promote public transport options, include example to an office or site with your event promotions / invitations. contact your local Council to connect with local community services to arrange free transport for participants (e.g. mini-bus). encourage participation from local groups and through additional promotion via the local Neighbourhood House, Men's Shed, Library service or community health centre. Also consider holding an event in partnership or in close proximity to these organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include a contact number on promotional material for interested participants to register (if required) or seek further information, as an alternative to sending people online to learn more. partner with older adult activity groups to arrange transport and participation examples of these types of groups i.e. Probus, U3A etc or seek advice from local Council about active groups in area? consider and ensure accessibility of the venue e.g. seating, steps etc to accommodate older participants and mobility needs.



5.4.2 Face-to-face workshops or meetings

May include large-scale community forums, small group discussions, focus groups etc.

Community cohorts	All cohorts	Young people aged 12-25 years	Women, men and gender non-binary/ gender diverse people
Approaches and techniques for making your workshops or meetings inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use plain English in any engagement materials or activities to ensure information is easily understood and interpreted by a wide audience • ask others their pronouns and introduce yours when first meeting community. Establishing this creates an inclusive environment from the start. Ensure to use the right pronouns and apologise if you make a mistake • avoid language which is derogatory or minimising of a specific individual or group of people • include a range of methods people can participate with – e.g. polls, quizzes, butchers' paper, resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use cross-generational workshop energisers that help participants to connect and feel comfortable with each other e.g. name tag scavenger hunts, find three things everyone on your table has in common etc.) A great resource for this is https://www.sessionlab.com/library/energiser. • include a range of methods people can participate with, not just butchers' paper and post-it notes (e.g., polls, quizzes, and movement). • consider peer to peer education or using young people as facilitators. Contact the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACIVC) who offer support in designing and facilitating youth-led consultations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as per 'Community Events'



5.4.2 Face-to-face workshops or meetings

Community cohorts	People who identify as LGBTIQ+	People with disability	People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	People experiencing social and economic disadvantage	People aged 65+
Approaches and techniques for making your workshops or meetings inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include space for participants to note their pronouns on their name tags. ensure presenters and speakers are diverse and reflective of LGBTIQ communities. for topics where the discussion may be emotionally triggering have a support person present (possibly also a separate quiet room). prefer venues that have inclusive facilities (e.g. unisex toilets) Celebrate diversity as part of the workshop introduction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure venues are accessible for all abilities and this is included in promotion, for example include a text description and visual representation of the facilities, location and accessible entry and exit points, use a microphone when available. seek, through registration, any supports or adjustments that may be necessary and be sure to be responsive to requests (e.g. AUSLAN, audio aids, large print formats, etc). ensure the layout of the meeting space is accessible e.g. enough room for a scooter to move around freely, height of catering tables etc., this is also relevant for neuro-diverse participants who may require a breakout space to review and consider information or have time out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> seek, through registration, if translation services are necessary and provide translators as required. Brief the translators prior to the event. engage champions from local multicultural communities who can help disseminate information and support on the day to be a familiar face (provide appropriate pre-briefing and remuneration for their involvement) . with communication materials, include sentences in other dominant community languages that will help entice people to learn more through the Melbourne Water promoted translation service, not just the translation service symbol. presence at community festivals – go to people rather than expecting them to come to your events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider any out-of-pocket expenses someone may have in order to participate in the event and where possible provide support e.g. cover transport costs, provide childcare etc. offer pre-session briefings to help people feel comfortable with the content and what is expected of them as part of their participation. partner with local Council, Community Health service or disability service staff to buddy up and attend with participants to assist them in providing feedback (particularly if a very important group to hear from) e.g. if it was a project in an area where homelessness or social disadvantage more broadly is significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include a contact number on promotional material for interested participants to register (if required) or seek further information, as an alternative to sending people online to learn more. partner with older adult activity groups to arrange transport and participation. consider accessibility and facilities in the venue including adequate seating, and close access to bathrooms.



5.4.3 Cohort-specific engagement

These approaches and techniques can be applied to most engagement tools when they are being targeted to one cohort.

Community cohorts	Young people aged 12-25 years	People who identify as LGBTIQ+	People with disability	People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	People experiencing social and economic disadvantage	People aged 65+
Approaches and techniques for making your workshops or meetings inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> seek advice from the Melbourne Water education team, who can connect in with the <u>Geography Teachers Association of Victoria (GTAV)</u> to design an in-school activity that can be rolled out across many schools – alternatively, if your project has a local catchment, they may support you to contact the local schools directly. seek support and advice from Youth officers at the local Council who are well connected with young people in the local community. work with youth organisations to provide youth facilitators and support promotion, such as <u>Youth Affairs Council of Victoria</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify trusted networks or services in the project's communities to help recruit participants or to join an existing meeting where you can host a conversation organisation such as <u>Minus 18</u> and <u>Queerspace</u> have additional resources and peer support service that can provide staff with contacts and connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> partner with local council, community health service providers and disability support services who run planned activity groups that the project team can visit or might be happy to run their own activity with a conversation toolkit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage local champions to facilitate conversations or promote targeted activities. They are likely to be trusted members of the community who can also help frame the conversation in a way that will reach their community. You can identify local champions by reaching out to staff who have recently worked with these communities. partner with local councils who have established networks and contacts, to understand and reach diverse communities and connect in with local champions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create a buddy system to help disseminate information through the community and support others to participate. This might look like engaging community champions to conduct interviews in their local housing estate (make sure you reimburse them for their time including through catering and a payment). consider financial reimbursement to support participation in a workshop, focus group or other engagement activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> connect with a local <u>U3A</u>, <u>Probus</u> group, Library or Neighbourhood House program where you might be able to join in one of their groups to host a conversation or even head out on a local walk of a waterway with one of their walking groups to host a 'walk'n'talk'.



5.4.4 Online engagement

Online engagement may include workshops, webinars, surveys, mapping tools, discussion forums etc.

Community cohorts	All cohorts	Young people aged 12-25 years	Women, men and gender non-binary/ gender diverse people
Approaches and techniques for making your workshops or meetings inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use simple plain English and inclusive language in your messaging to suit a variety of education levels. • only ask demographic questions that are necessary, make sure they are inclusive and give people the option to not answer them (see section 5.3 for inclusive survey design). • consider accessibility features for online engagement to ensure everyone can participate fully and understand the content being discussed or displayed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use gamification to attract participation and educate participants on the content. Melbourne Water's Digital Engagement team can provide advice on tools that are available to support this or may be able to suggest the re-use of existing digital engagement assets. • consider the use of social media as a tool for young people to participate e.g. mobile optimised features, videos, discussion forums, photo sharing etc. Employ short, sharp participation options such as quick polls, "Yes/No and more." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as per 'Community Events'.



5.4.4 Online engagement

Community cohorts	People who identify as LGBTIQ+	People with disability	People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	People experiencing social and economic disadvantage	People aged 65+
Approaches and techniques for making your workshops or meetings inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include imagery that represents the LGBTIQ+ community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure online accessibility requirements are met and prioritise the use of tools that support screen readers etc. E.g. alternative text, captions, contrast, infographics, video transcripts, etc. clearly communicate the accessibility of different online tools and provide appropriate alternatives. for online events such as workshops/webinars seek out as part of registration what additional supports may be required. use audio material that helps describe an experience or the project for those with a vision impairment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure people can see diversity in the visual communications including a range of images, icons and representation. consider the use of images/videos that can help communicate content to support informed participation. promote available translation services and provide translated content where appropriate. for online events such as workshops/webinars seek out as part of registration what translation services may be required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure engagement tools and activities are accessible, including for mobile phones (not just computers). Also consider digital literacy levels and access to devices. A local library may be able to provide access to devices, computers or free wifi. consider the use of images/videos that can help to simply communicate complex content. for online events such as workshops/webinars seek out as part of registration what supports might be needed e.g. access to a computer or free wifi, or printed copies of materials if they are joining via their phone and work with local community organisations to be able to provide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer training/pre-session briefings on how to access and use online engagement tool. schedule online information/feedback sessions to compliment online engagement methods – e.g. some people may just want to talk rather than complete online surveys etc. in invitations include tips and tricks on using the online engagement tools and promote how they can get support, e.g. Zoom Cheat Sheet. include in-session technology support e.g. have a dedicated person who they can reach out to during a session if they are having technology challenges.

6. Resources

The following table is a shortlist of key internal and external resources available for inclusive communications and engagement. This also includes the resources listed throughout this document.



Resources

Resource	Description
General	
<u>Waterways of the West CALD toolkit</u>	A toolkit to assist practitioners in improving their engagement and educational practices with CALD communities.
<u>Intersectionality and Gender Impact Assessment, Gender Equality Commission</u>	A short 6 minute video on applying an intersectional lens when looking at community impact.
Accessibility	
<u>Accessibility guidelines for government communications, Victorian Government</u>	Victorian Government guidelines for making your documents, events and communications as accessible as possible.
<u>How people read, Australian Government Style Manual</u>	Write and design content that matches how users read.
<u>Make content accessible - digital guide Victorian Government</u>	A practical guide to making your digital content accessible.
<u>Accessible events guideline and checklist, Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing</u>	Designed to assist organisers improve the accessibility of events to increase the participation of people with a disability.
<u>Making events accessible, W3C</u>	Checklist for meetings, conferences, training, and presentations that are remote/virtual, in-person, or hybrid.

Resource	Description
Plain English	
<u>Writing in Plain English, Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing</u>	Slide pack from presentation by Tanya Simmons as part of Victorian Government Accessible Communications Month. May 2022.
<u>Plain English or easy English, Scope Australia</u>	Blog with tips and examples for plain English and easy English.
<u>Plain English Foundation</u>	Resources and training available to help with writing clear and concise content.
Translation	
<u>Effective translations, Victorian Guidelines on Policy and Procedures</u>	Assist government departments, agencies and service providers to use language services effectively.
<u>Introduction to translation and interpreting, Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing</u>	Slide pack from presentation by Multicultural Communications unit at Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing as part of Victorian Government Accessible Communications Month. May 2022.

Resources

Resource	Description
Inclusive language	
<u>Inclusive language, Australian Government Style Manual</u>	Inclusive language guides for different community cohorts.
<u>Guide to Inclusive Language, RMIT University</u>	General principles of inclusive communication, and specific examples and guidelines for communicating with some key groups.
<u>LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide, Victorian Government</u>	How to use language respectfully and inclusively when working with and referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, and queer and questioning people.
<u>Words at Work – Building inclusion through the power of language, Diversity Council Australia</u>	Five steps to inclusive language.
Surveys / data collection	
<u>Standards Australian Bureau of Statistics</u>	ABS standards for demographic data
<u>Data collection statement: People matter survey Victorian Public sector commission</u>	A good example of a plain English easy to ready data collection statement.
<u>Designing Forms Australian government</u>	Guidance to help you design digital forms and surveys.

7. Legislative requirements

There are federal and state laws to protect people from discrimination that as a service provider representing and engaging with diverse community members, we need to understand and comply with:

Federal laws

- [Legislation | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
 - Including the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 which is referred to in section 4.1

State specific laws

- [The Gender Equality Act 2020 | Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector](#)
- [Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010 – Short Guide](#)

Over time we will add to this list of requirements, in particular those that Communications and Engagement professionals need to be aware of.



8. Glossary



Accessibility

Accessibility is the ability to access and benefit from a process, system, service, or product. If something is accessible, then anyone can directly access or use it, regardless of their ability, location, language, culture, time and resources, or any other differentiating factor that contributes to the diversity of our communities.⁶

Communications

Sharing or exchanging information or ideas, using a range of methods.⁷

Community

The term community refers to a group of people that has something in common such as identity, behaviours, interests, or values. A community often share a sense of place in a given geographical area (e.g. a country, city, town, or neighbourhood) or in virtual space through communication platforms.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (formerly referred to as 'CALD')

The phrase 'culturally and linguistically diverse' is a broad term used to describe communities with diverse languages, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, traditions, societal structures and religions. This term is often used synonymously with the phrase 'ethnic communities', however, culturally and linguistically diverse (we are advised not to shorten to 'CALD' anymore), cultural diversity or multicultural communities are the preferred terms used by Australian service providers and agencies.

Digital accessibility (also referred to as online or web accessibility)

Digital accessibility refers to how a user can access the same information and the same content, regardless of their ability, of a website, app or other digital experience is by all possible users. At its core, an accessible website is one where any user, no matter their ability, can access the same information and the same content.

Digital engagement

Using a range of digital methods, tools and technology to engage with and educate our community, Supports face to face engagement and provides the community with an end to end engagement experience.

Diversity

Diversity refers to points of difference, including cultural background, ethnicity and race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, work experience, socio-economic status, age, profession, ability, education, profession, gender identity, caring responsibilities, and more.

Engagement

Engagement is defined as a planned process with the purpose of working with communities and stakeholders to inform decisions, share knowledge and strengthen relationships.

Equity

Recognition that some groups experience additional and significant barriers to participation and inclusion, and seeking to address these through providing individuals with what they need to participate fully.

Inclusion

The action, practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources to include people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised from a group or structure.

Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people (e.g. of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to an engagement project.⁸

Inclusive engagement

The practices that allow all people to feel valued and respected. This is irrespective of age, disability, gender, religion, sexual preference or nationality. This is evident when anyone who wishes to can fully participate. This means they can access, understand, and contribute their perspectives and talents to the engagement.⁹

Intersectionality

Refers to how the various aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.¹⁰

LGBTIQ+

In Australia, LGBTIQ is used as an inclusive umbrella abbreviation/acronym to embrace diverse sexualities, genders and sex characteristics. The LGBTIQ acronym is a shortcut for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (and gender diverse), intersex and queer. Variations of the acronym are also used to include other identities, such as asexuality. The choice of the acronym can change depending on the community context or topics discussed. There is not one LGBTIQ community.

Stakeholder

The word stakeholder refers to individuals, groups or organisations with a stake or interest in the outcome of a decision. Stakeholders may also have the ability to influence the decision given their role or position.

