Tools to assist in evaluation of municipal public health and wellbeing plans

Module 5 of 7: Engaging the community in evaluation

State Government Victoria
Boroondara City of Harmony
Knox City Council
Manningham
Maroondah City Council
City of Monash
City of Whitehorse
Yarra Ranges Council

Tools to assist in evaluation of municipal public health and wellbeing plans

Module 5 of 7: Engaging the community in evaluation

This resource is available electronically on the internet at:
http://www.health.vic.gov.au/regions/eastern/initiatives.htm

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Introduction

The purpose of this module is to assist in making decisions about the level and scope of community involvement in MPHWP evaluation activities.

The module is one of a suite of seven resources entitled ***Tools to assist in the evaluation of MPHWPs*** designed to provide evaluation support and guidance to practitioners involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of MPHWPs as required under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. See ***Module 1: MPHWP evaluation at a glance*** for more information.

The following table describes each module and its use against MPHWP evaluation actions[1].

Table 1: Alignment of *Tools to assist in evaluation of MPHWPs* modules with evaluation actions

MPHWP evaluation action	*Tools to assist in evaluation of MPHWPs* modules	
Understanding MPHWP evaluation	Use ***Module 1; MPHWP evaluation at a glance*** to: • understand the legislative requirements for MPHWP evaluation under the *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*. • understand the multilayered approach applied to MPHWP evaluation applied in this resource.	
Develop an MPHWP evaluation strategy	Use ***Module 2; Building an MPHWP evaluation strategy*** to: • establish the governance mechanisms for MPHWP evaluation • clarify how each evaluation question will be approached and what will be evaluated • establish systems to coordinate evaluation elements • design summary MPHWP evaluation reporting	
Determine role of internal partners, external partners and the community	Use ***Module 3: Achieving a culture of evaluation*** to develop internal relationships that promote MPHWP evaluation across council	
	Use ***Module 4: Evaluating with partners*** to work with external partners to include assisting in the design and conduct of MPHWP evaluation in their MPHWP roles	
	Use ***Module 5: Engaging the community in evaluation*** to engage the community more effectively in the design and conduct of MPHWP evaluation	**You are here**
Design systems to support the evaluation strategy	Use ***Module 6: Making evaluation sustainable*** to develop approaches to the design and conduct of MPHWP evaluation that are sustainable	
Conduct MPHWP evaluation	Use ***Module 1*** to guide how answers to evaluation questions will be brought together, analysed and reported Use ***Modules 3, 4,5*** to guide the way in which internal partners, external partners and the community are engaged in the conduct of evaluation Use ***Module 7: Designing and conducting an evaluation*** to design and conduct an evaluation of selected MPHWP topics or to support someone else to do so	

[1] Victorian Department of Health, 2013, *Guide to municipal public health planning*, DH, Melbourne.

PART 1: The essentials of community engagement in evaluation

1.1 The Act

The *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires councils to:

…provide for the involvement of people in the local community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan.

The legislation does not prescribe how the local community might be involved. However, some guidance can be drawn from two principles underpinning the legislation:

Part 2, Section 8

Principle of accountability

1. *Persons who are engaged in the administration of this Act should as far as practicable ensure that decisions are transparent, systematic and appropriate.*
2. *Members of the public should therefore be given—*

(a) access to reliable information in appropriate forms to facilitate a good understanding of public health issues; and
(b) opportunities to participate in policy and program development.

Part 2, Section 10

Principle of collaboration

Public health and wellbeing, in Victoria and at a national and international level, can be enhanced through collaboration between all levels of Government and industry, business, communities and individuals.

Sections 8 and 10 suggest that involving the community in the development, implementation and evaluation of the public health and wellbeing plan (MPHWP) means:

- providing information on public health and wellbeing issues to the community that is accurate, accessible and user-friendly
- providing opportunities for community participation in all stages of the MPHWP
- valuing and pursuing collaboration.

1.2 Approaches to community engagement

The term community can have a number of meanings usually referring to people living within a geographical area or sharing a specific interest. Within a local government context it includes a range of stakeholders;

- the general public, as ratepayers, residents or visitors to a municipality and as users of service and facilities - with an often wide ranging demographic profile
- formal or informal groups within the community, for example, residents' associations, local businesses, religious groups, sporting clubs and arts and cultural organisations.
- organisations delivering services to the community, for example, community health agencies, not-for-profit welfare agencies, schools and local police.

This module focuses predominantly on the involvement of the general public and formal or informal groups within the community.

As a general rule the level of interest shown by these community stakeholders is likely to vary depending on how the decisions of council impact on them. For example, the local cycling club will be very interested in cycle paths; the traders' association will be very interested in parking; both might be interested in traffic flow.

Organisations delivering services to the community, for example, health and community services will be very interested in council's role in their area of activity and might be keen to extend their interest as a stakeholder to develop collaborative partnerships with council. Engaging with partners in evaluation is dealt with separately in ***Module 4: Evaluating with partners.***

Community engagement can represent a significant investment by council in time and resources. It also requires the community to give of their time – for some this means time away from family or time away from their businesses. It is important therefore that community engagement activities are well designed – with aims that are clear to the council and community alike and with processes that actively support participation.

The way your council engages the community in the MPHWP will be influenced by council's general approach to community engagement. There is a range of ways to approach community engagement.

In Victoria, a model developed by the International Association for Public Participation[2] is widely used. This IAP2 model describes public participation using five levels. Each level has a clearly prescribed goal and makes a 'promise' to the community.

[2] International Association for Public Participation 2004, *IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum,* International Association for Public Participation Australasia, http://www.iap2.org.au/sitebuilder/resources/knowledge/asset/files/36/iap2spectrum.pdf

Table 2: IAP2 Model

	Public Participation Goal	Promise to the Public
Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed.
Consult	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum extent possible.
Empower	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.	We will implement what you decide.

It is clear that to satisfy Sections 8 and 10 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008,* engaging the community in the MPHWP would be expected to strive for the features of at least the first four levels of this model wherever possible.

1.3 Community engagement in MPHWP evaluation

The way in which your council engages the community in MPHWP evaluation is likely to be part of a broader approach to community engagement in MPHWP development and implementation. That is, just as evaluation is intrinsically embedded in the MPHWP planning cycle, so too, engaging the community in evaluation will make better sense when it is connected to all other aspects of community engagement in the MPHWP.

Nonetheless, MPHWP evaluation will require its own focus if it is not to be lost in a larger agenda. The MPHWP evaluation strategy approach proposed in Module 2 will guide the specific role for the community in MPHWP evaluation by focussing engagement on the MPHWP evaluation questions.

Table 3 illustrates a potential role for the community and associated IAP2 level applied to each MPHWP evaluation question.

Table 3. Council and community role to answering the MPHWP evaluation questions

Evaluation Question	Council Approach	Community Role	IAP2 level
Have we achieved the change we sought?	Compare information used to identify need in the municipal scan stage with most recent data for each stated goal	• Provide input to the development of health and wellbeing indicators (in the planning stage) • Receive information on progress against health and wellbeing indicators • Provide views on findings and recommendations - feeding into identification of priorities and goals of next MPHWP	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate
Are we having the influence we expected?	Select key policies, programs or activities to evaluate in appropriate depth based on available resources, assessed risks and opportunities	• Participate in selected evaluations as participants, informants or other interested parties • Provide views on findings and recommendations	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate
Have we done what we said we would do?	Collate regular reports on the progress of all MPHWP strategies using routine systems	• Receive summary progress information • Provide views on findings and recommendations	Inform Consult
How effective is the way we plan?	Select key planning principles to evaluate based on available resources, assessed risks and opportunities	• Participate in selected evaluations as participants, informants or other interested parties • Provide views on findings and recommendations.	Inform Consult Involve Collaborate

While 'Inform' and 'Consult' would appear almost minimum public participation goals, extending evaluation engagement to the 'Involve' or even 'Collaborate' levels is less obvious. However, there is scope to operate at these levels, for example, acknowledging the aspirational aims of community health and wellbeing indicators means community ownership is vital. Similarly, the community and community members will on occasions be the subject of specific evaluations and their direct advice on solutions will be sought.

1.4 Community capacity building

Most communities are likely to have a mixed experience of evaluation and the concepts and language of evaluation might be a challenge to some community members. Genuine engagement will therefore require an approach that strives to demystify the evaluation process and strengthen the capacity of the community to contribute over time. Ways to do this include:

- Identifying the different features of each community, for example, different capacity, culture, dynamics, politics, resources and social capital and designing community engagement accordingly.
- Using engagement methods that encourage participation and overcome barriers, for example, try a multi-level approach using both traditional approaches such as face to face forums, and new methods, such as social media.
- Presenting information that is accessible and user-friendly, for example, in everyday language, community languages, large print and adapted for people with a disability.

You will need to be clear about when you will be engaging with the community and what you will be asking them to contribute. It is important ethically to inform the community you are seeking information from about how and what you will use the information for.

See the ***National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*** at *http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e35*

It is important to remember that engagement is a two-way process and you should always aim to feedback ideas or decisions stemming from engagement activities to your participants.

PART 2: Engaging the community in evaluation

2.1 Answering the MPHWP evaluation questions

The best way to ensure the community is meaningfully engaged in evaluation is to design evaluation with community engagement in mind. It is far more difficult to redesign evaluation once systems have already been set up to collect and report data or if planning has proceeded too far.

The following looks at MPHWP evaluation questions to see how community engagement can be built in.

Evaluation Question: Have we achieved the change we sought?

Answering the question: *Have we achieved the change we sought?* is concerned with revisiting the data or indicators used to identify local need to assess whether there has been any significant change.

Engaging the community in this level of evaluation has its starting point in the identification of high level health and wellbeing indicators – conducted at the MPHWP development stage.

From a community perspective it will be important to choose indicators for your MPHWP that are relevant and clear, That is, indicators should be easy to understand and provide a snapshot of things that matter to people. See ***Module 2: Building an evaluation strategy.***

Community engagement in this evaluation process would ideally occur towards the end of the MPHWP planning cycle and would coincide with the evaluation of the overall MPHWP. This would allow the community to consider their own experience and observations and express their views on findings and recommendations – feeding into identification of priorities and goals of next MPHWP.

Evaluation Question: Are we having the influence we expected?

Answering the question: *Are we having the influence we expected?* is considered by taking an in-depth view of selected topics. The selection of topics is based on assessed risks and opportunities and available resources. Individual evaluations might occur at a range of times throughout the four-year cycle.

Engaging the community in these selected evaluations will be guided by the specific scope of the evaluation and the evaluation questions asked. Engagement might be considered in the governance arrangements, for example, community representatives on the reference group, or in the methodology, for example, as key informants or as survey interviewers. See ***Module 7: Designing and conducting an evaluation.***

Evaluation Question: Have we done what we said we would do?

This element of MPHWP evaluation is largely concerned with monitoring implementation. Engaging the community might simply mean keeping the community informed of progress and consulting on specific issues that arise. This might practically occur to coincide with the MPHWP Annual Review.

MPHWP annual reviews and their relationship to evaluation activities is dealt with in *A practical guide to conducting annual reviews* of MPHWPs[3].

Evaluation Question: How effective is the way we plan?

Answering the question: *How effective is the way we plan?* will be driven by the selection of MPHWP planning topics for evaluation.

Community engagement is itself a clear area of interest but the community might also be engaged in evaluation of other aspects of MPHWP planning. Again, how the community is engaged will be guided by the specific scope of the evaluation and the evaluation questions asked. See ***Module 7: Designing and conducting an evaluation.***

Use the **Community engagement in MPHWP evaluation tool** to consider the roles the community can play in each level of MPHWP evaluation and the methods you can use to support these roles. See **page 14**

2.2 Methods of community engagement in MPHWP evaluation

You can consider a range of methods of community engagement in line with your evaluation aims. In relation to selected evaluations these might align with the qualitative methods you have identified for gathering evaluation information. The following table shows some examples of methods and their benefits or limitations[4] from a community engagement perspective:

[3] Victorian Department of Health Southern Metropolitan Region, 2012*, A practical guide to conducting annual reviews of MPHWPs,* DH SMR, Dandenong
http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/E2DCDF76848BC286CA257AC3006E4DB2/$FILE/Final%20SMR%20Annual%20Review%20Guide_Mar2012.pdf

[4] Adapted from Department of Communities 2005, *Engaging Queenslanders: Community engagement in the business of government,* State of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Table 4: Benefits and limitations of community engagement methods

Method	Benefits or Limitations
Citizens' jury	❖ Valuable for developing a deep understanding of an issue. ❖ Offers an opportunity for non-traditional stakeholders to hear expert testimony on an issue, deliberate together and propose recommendations to inform decision-making.
Roundtable	❖ A joint planning/decision-making forum between council and key stakeholders with expertise about a specific issue. ❖ Helps to establish a collaborative process from the outset. ❖ Most valuable in the planning phase.
Focus group	❖ Useful with relatively homogeneous, pre-existing groups with interest in the issue. ❖ Allows for creative thinking if well facilitated.
Public meeting	❖ Allows stakeholders to self-identify and views of community groups to be expressed. ❖ Not a strong forum for dialogue. ❖ Meeting management skills needed to channel energy productively.
Workshop	❖ Smaller groups selected for skills and interests. ❖ Can produce structured exploration of issues, options and ideas. ❖ Needs skilled facilitation.
Online consultation	❖ Can provide opportunities to reach a large audience to gather data, disseminate findings and canvass options.
Consultative or advisory committee	❖ Members are selected or appointed to participate in MPHWP planning, implementation and evaluation.
Individual discussions	❖ Sometimes useful for rapid data collection.
Survey research	❖ Formal data gathering using objective techniques, often using a sample of stakeholders. ❖ Useful in the data collection phase of evaluation.
Participant observation	❖ Community trained or professional researchers can gain first-hand knowledge of the program, project or initiative.

2.3 Planning activities that engage the community in MPHWP evaluation

It is important to think through how you are going to engage the community in the overall evaluation of the MPHWP. If you design community engagement activities to support MPHWP development and implementation, it is useful to consider at the same time how these activities might support MPHWP evaluation. For example,

- Can evaluation be included in information provided on the MPHWP planning cycle?
- Can high level health and wellbeing indicators be introduced and validated in discussions on local needs and priorities?
- Can the progress of the MPHWP be reported in ways that support comparison over time?

Planning community engagement in selected evaluations will be a much more specific process. The following questions can be asked to plan for appropriate community engagement activities.

Table 5: Prompting questions for community engagement tasks

Task	Prompting Questions
Clarify the aims of your evaluation and the role of the community	❖ What is the evaluation purpose? ❖ At what stages do you need to engage the community in the evaluation activity? ❖ What are the negotiable and non-negotiable factors? If there are no negotiable factors, your engagement will not go beyond the level of 'Inform' on the IAP2 Spectrum. ❖ What is your 'promise to the public'?
Clarify who needs to be involved from the community	❖ What formal or informal groups exist in the community with specific interest in your specific evaluation topic (excluding formal partners)? ❖ Are any of these at risk of being excluded from participation, for example Indigenous people, young people, people with a disability? ❖ Are there relevant features of the community, for example, local politics or community affiliations to take into account? ❖ Are there community or opinion leaders who are key participants in evaluation activities?

Task	Prompting Questions
Identify engagement opportunities	❖ Are there opportunities to 'go to the community' for evaluation information, for example, existing networks or events that provide ready access to parts of the community? ❖ Are there opportunities to combine evaluation activities with other compatible events, for example, conducting surveys at a local fair or other community event? ❖ Do your partners have access to, and the trust of, key elements of the community that would fast track engagement in evaluation activities? ❖ Can working with partners reduce duplication or make better use of limited resources?
Identify engagement challenges	❖ How are you going to reach people who may be at risk of being excluded from evaluation activities? Will you need to arrange translators? Will people with disabilities need assistance to participate? What about people who have limited transport options or restricted availability? ❖ Is there a risk of consultation fatigue – where communities don't feel listened to and have not received appropriate feedback for the investment of their time? ❖ Are there local 'hot issues' that might derail the evaluation?
Design engagement activities	❖ What activities are best suited to your aims of each stage of your evaluation? (See *Methods of Community Engagement* below) ❖ What timeframe do you have for each evaluation activity? ❖ What budget do you have? ❖ Do you, or others in your business unit, have the skills to facilitate engagement activities? ❖ Are there experts within your organisation or within your partner agencies who can assist? ❖ Will you need to employ a contractor to carry out any aspects of your engagement activities? ❖ Are there risks associated with your engagement activities? ❖ What can you do to mitigate the risk?
Prepare for activities	❖ Do you have clear messages prepared about the aims and processes of evaluation? ❖ Have you prepared objective information that will bring the community up to speed with the evaluation topic(s)? ❖ Does the activity provide adequate time for meaningful discussion? ❖ Is the physical space and set up accessible and conducive to contributions from all intended participants?

2.4 Implementing activities that engage the community in MPHWP evaluation

If you have prepared for your community engagement activities, implementation should proceed to plan. However, there are some things you can do that will get the most from the activity and participants and that will build a foundation of cooperation and trust to support future community engagement.

Set the tone for participation and cooperation

- Create an environment of trust that encourages participants to express their views.
- Be proactive in encouraging input from those less willing or able to speak up.
- Be aware of, and manage any tensions that already exist or that might arise.
- Be generous with information – the facts and figures.
- Be prepared for criticism and challenges to the status quo .
- Beware of tokenism or reactiveness – don't just inform and placate.
- Guide discussion towards what can be learned for the future.
- Build community capacity, knowledge and skills.

Feedback the results of evaluation to the community

- Consider the community as a specific audience when designing your evaluation communication and dissemination strategy.
- Make sure feedback on evaluation results is timely and use plain English – avoid jargon and explain complex terms.
- Acknowledge the contribution of the community to the results of the evaluation, whether it be continuing with the status quo or making significant changes.

Reflect on the effectiveness of engaging the community in the evaluation

- Consider including an evaluation of your community engagement strategy as part of answering the question: *How effective is the way we plan?* in your MPHWP evaluation strategy?

PART THREE: Further resources

The following is a list of useful community engagement resources in addition to those cited in the body of the module. All web based material was last accessed 20 September 2013.

Australian Capital Territory, 2011, Engaging Canberrans: A guide to community engagement, Canberra
http://www.timetotalk.act.gov.au/storage/communityengagement_FINAL.pdf

Chappell, B, 2008, *Community Engagement Handbook: A Model Framework for leading practice In Local Government in South Australia*, Adelaide
http://www.localgovt.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/68955/Community_Engagement_Handbook.pdf

Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2005, *Effective Community Engagement Kit*, http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/effective-engagement

Download the Kit:

Book 1 - An Introduction to Engagement

Book 2 - The Engagement Planning Workbook

Book 3 - The Engagement Toolkit

Yarra Ranges Council, 2011, *Essential Engagement: A Community Engagement Framework for the Yarra Ranges,* Melbourne

APPENDIX

Community engagement in MPHWP evaluation tool

These tools can be used to clarify the roles the community can play at each level of MPHWP evaluation and identify the methods you can use to support these roles. There is a separate toll for each evaluation question.

Column 1: Describe the broad role taken in answering this evaluation question. You do not need to enter anything in this column unless you wish to review council's role too.

Column 2: Record the level of community participation you consider applies to this aspect of MPHWP evaluation (See IAP2 table on **page 4** above).

Column 3: Describe the role you think the community might play (Consider *Table 3: Council and community role to answering the MPHWP evaluation questions* on **page 5** above).

Decide when the best time to engage the community in this role. This will need to align with MPHWP planning activities in your council. However the following considerations might be useful:

- To answer *Have we achieved the change we sought?* it is likely to be at the commencement of MPHWP planning and towards the end the MPHWP cycle ahead of planning for the next MPHWP.
- To answer *Are we having the influence we expected?* or *How effective is the way we plan?* it is likely to be particular to the timing of the specific evaluation activity.
- To answer *Have we done what we said we would do?* it is likely to align with the release of MPHWP Annual Review information.

Column 6: Determine appropriate methods of community engagement based on how you can best support the community in their role(s) (See *Table 4: Benefits and limitations of community engagement methods* **page 9**).

Once you are clear on what you need from the community and identified your broad community engagement method(s) you can set about planning evaluation engagement activities.

Evaluation Question: ***Have we achieved the change we sought?***

Council will…	**IAP2 level**	**Community Role**	**Engagement Method**
Compare information used to identify need in the municipal scan stage with most recent information for each stated goal, including: • selecting health and wellbeing indicators in the MPHWP planning stage • considering progress of selected indicators • using indicator information to identify priorities and goals of next MPHWP.	What level(s) best describe your public participation goals for this aspect of MPHWP evaluation?	What role will the community have in this aspect of MPHWP evaluation? At what times during the MPHWP cycle?	What method(s) will you use to support this role?

Evaluation Question: ***Are we having the influence we expected?***

Council will…	**IAP2 level**	**Community Role**	**Engagement Method**
Work with partners to evaluate key policies, programs or activities in appropriate depth based on available resources, assessed risks and opportunities. This will include: • selecting key policies, programs or activities to evaluate • designing and undertaking or supporting selected evaluations • using the findings of selected evaluations to inform action for subsequent MPHWPs.	What level(s) best describe your public participation goals for this aspect of MPHWP evaluation?	What role will the community have in this aspect of MPHWP evaluation? At what times during the MPHWP cycle?	What method(s) will you use to support this role?

Evaluation Question: ***Have we done what we said we would do?***

Council will…	**IAP2 level**	**Community Role**	**Engagement Method**
Collate regular reports on the progress of all MPHWP strategies using routine systems This will include: • systems design and implementation • routine reporting • using the findings to check progress of MPHWP implementation.	What level(s) best describe your public participation goals for this aspect of MPHWP evaluation?	What role will the community have in this aspect of MPHWP evaluation? At what times during the MPHWP cycle?	What method(s) will you use to support this role?

Evaluation Question: ***How effective is the way we plan?***

Council will…	**IAP2 level**	**Community Role**	**Engagement Method**
Evaluate key aspects of MPHWP planning against principles based on available resources, assessed risks and opportunities. This will include: • selecting aspects of MPHWP planning to evaluate • designing and undertaking selected evaluations • using the findings of selected evaluations to inform subsequent MPHWP planning practice.	What level(s) best describe your public participation goals for this aspect of MPHWP evaluation?	What role will the community have in this aspect of MPHWP evaluation? At what times during the MPHWP cycle?	What method(s) will you use to support this role?