

Engaging Forums

Promoting a Thinking Culture

Geelong has many business, government and community forums that deal with a wide range of issues.

If you're involved in forums, this brochure can help you to improve accessibility, build ownership, focus on identified needs and engage people in the issues facing the community.

Positioning Geelong for the future

Geelong is currently in transition from a manufacturing to a knowledge based economy, and is preparing for significant population growth over the next century.

These changes are expected to bring substantial benefits to the Geelong region and require the needs and interests of all parties to be considered. Engaging the communities will help make better decisions which reflect the interest and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

To get the best outcomes from these changes in the society and economy of Geelong there is a need to develop social capital and recognise the importance of developing shared ownership of the big ideas required to support Geelong's future.

Forums provide an opportunity for Geelong to position itself for the future and promote a thinking culture that values new ideas and recognises the value of different points of view.

Forums have the potential to encourage and enable greater community participation in the debate about Geelong's future. In order to maximise community ownership of this future they should be open to all residents and may play an important role in improving connectedness within the evolving community.

Forums are a key opportunity to demonstrate and nurture the leadership required, to harness the ideas and energy within the community and develop a common vision for Geelong's future.



The Value of Social Capital

"Social capital has been ascribed many benefits, including enhanced health, better educational outcomes, improved child welfare, lower crime rates, reduced tax evasion, and improved governmental responsiveness and efficiency. Social capital has also been linked to productivity, income and other indicators of economic performance."

Productivity Commission 2003: Social Capital: Reviewing the Concept and its Policy Implications





Elements of a successful forum

Be clear about what you are trying to achieve

- What is the purpose and subject of your forum?
- Who is the target audience?
- Let participants know what outcomes to expect

Understand your consultation process

Pitching your consultation and engagement process at the right level empowers the forum organiser to manage host and participant expectations and help maintain satisfaction. (Refer to IAP2 model)

Manage audience perception and behaviour

- Be fully transparent to prevent perceptions of a “hidden agenda” and inspire confidence regarding the integrity of the forum
- Foster a culture of tolerance, mutual respect and open-mindedness to maximise participation

Forum Design

- Offer a diverse range of challenging and interesting topics
- Use a variety of formats and technology to captivate and engage
- Choose a medium that is relevant to your target audience; minimise barriers to participation

Forum coordination and leadership

- Be aware of other forums that might be similar to yours; is there potential for collaboration and pooling of resources?
- Engage leadership bodies to share your vision for Geelong’s future and support and enhance the prioritisation of issues

Promote your forum effectively to attract the right participants

Success

- Define success – what is the impact of your forum?
- Objectively measure the outcomes

The Tomorrow’s Geelong Today Project Group

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A large part of our interest in the Leaders program stems from a desire to be informed and to engage with the issues affecting Geelong and the people influencing those issues.

Further Information

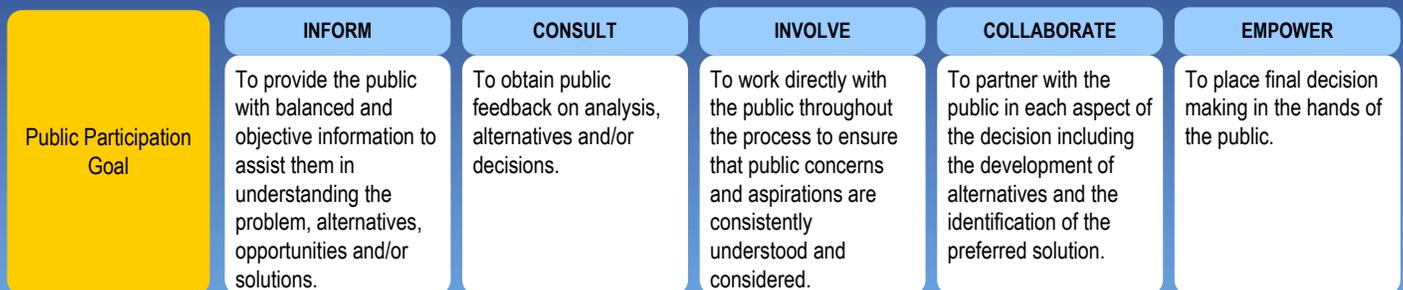
If you have any questions about this brochure, or to obtain a copy of the full research report, please email:

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Also refer to the IAP2 Practitioner Tools at www.iap2.org

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Increasing level of public impact



The spectrum outlines different levels of consultation and engagement, and can support forum organisers to be clear about their intent, design their forum to maximise engagement and target communication to achieve outcomes.