100 Ideas

To Help Make **Sligo**More Inclusive









Inclusive engagement is about recognising the unique circumstances of hard to reach groups in our community and acknowledging that traditional methods of engagement such as public meetings, consultations and workshops don't always work.

To be truly inclusive, our LCDC members, and other organisations, need to think beyond the usual methods of engagement and encourage all members of the community to voice their opinions, ideas and concerns.

Inclusive public engagement is about addressing the barriers to participation.





Sustainable Development Goals

Sligo PPN officially endorses The Sustainable Development Goals. These are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. The 17 Goals are all interconnected, and in order to leave no one behind, it is important that we achieve them all by 2030.







Introduction

There are groups in every community that are more difficult to engage with than others. This can be due to a variety of circumstances; personal, social and economic. Reaching out to these people presents a number of challenges beyond those we wrestle with every day as community engagement practitioners, however, it is critical that we recognise the importance of capturing these voices and allowing them an equal opportunity to shape the development of our county.

This booklet was developed by Sligo PPN, with input from key local and national organisations and community members. It documents 100 simple suggestions to help you engage with hard to reach groups across Sligo; the Bereaved, People with a Disability, Older People, Homeless, New Communities, Homeless People, People Living With Dementia, the LGBTQ+ community, Travellers, Children and Young People.

We have chosen these groups not because they are more important than any other, but simply because they are highlighted within Sligo's LECP (Local Economic and Community Plan) as groups with specific needs, or are emerging groups within our community that we have not yet focused on in our engagement practise. The book includes tips regarding engagement tools, techniques and content, as well as ideas to raise awareness and attract participants.

A note on using this book

We acknowledge that this is not a definitive list of groups or ideas, just some tips we have identified through our experience to get you thinking. We intend for this booklet to evolve to reflect changes within our Sligo community and we would welcome any of your suggestions for improvement.

Hard to reach are those people who may face barriers to participation. Not all individuals in these groups may be hard to reach.

In identifying these groups, we have not assumed that all the issues are the same for each group or that all the approaches to engagement can be replicated every time.

We understand that everyone is different and that every group is made up of individuals with unique circumstances. Engagement methods need to be adapted accordingly. Likewise, every project, idea or issue is unique and the tools and techniques need to be adapted to suit each project.

NB. This guide follows in the footsteps of the 100 Ideas to Help Engage Your Community Online prepared by Bang the Table.

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GENERAL ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Every community and every project is different, but there are some overarching principles that need be considered before you design your engagement strategy.

- 1 Do your research to understand who may be hard to reach. Talk to the Sligo PPN Team Resource Worker to understand the make up of the community you are targeting and how you might tailor your approach.
- 2 Identify organisations that work with hard to reach groups in the county through the PPN.
- 3 One size does not fit all. Target your methods according to each group, the geographical location, the issue or topic being discussed and the purpose or desired outcome of the project.
- 4 Use ambassadors to recruit participants. Ambassadors can be interested community members who have networks within their groups, for example to target new community members ask Sligo FRC (Family Resource Centre) intercultural project if they know any strong community representatives.
- 5 The community of Sligo is becoming increasingly diverse. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) should not be identified as a standalone 'hard to reach' group. It is important to be aware of the needs of CALD groups in any engagement exercises. This includes an awareness of language and communication needs as well as cultural differences associated with engagement.
- 6 Make sure people are aware of the topic they are being engaged about and how they may benefit from participating. Set realistic expectations and make sure you are clear on what is negotiable and what is not.
- 7 Provide feedback and acknowledge contributions made Recognise that people's time is valuable. Their commitment to the process should be respected and they need to know where their information is going.
- **8** Engagement activities require the building of trust and confidence in people and the process. Make sure your approach is warm and friendly and follow up with people if necessary.
- **9** Before you prepare an engagement strategy, ask representatives of the hard to reach groups how they would like to participate.
- 10 Only involve community members in meaningful engagement. There is no point undertaking an engagement exercise for the sake of it when decisions have already been made. Nothing makes community madder!!





NEW COMMUNITIES

Sligo is becoming an increasingly diverse community

- At present just over 15% of the Sligo population is non native Irish (7.8% from the UK, 4.3% from the EU and 3.7% from the Rest of the World)
- Sligo has the highest proportion of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland – the average in each county is 0.13% and in Sligo it's 0.40%
- Sligo accounts for 1.38% of the national population, whereas 4.06% of all asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland live in Sligo

- 1 Ensure there will be no associated costs with attending events as some people may find it difficult covering costs such as transport or childcare. Offering food and organising public transport through companies such as LocalLink are good ways to recognise their contribution.
- 2 Make sure your venue has appropriate multilingual signage or bring your own.
- 3 Language can be a barrier to participation. Interpreters may be necessary to ensure that complex issues are fully understood and information may need to be distributed in key community languages.
- 4 Understand that there is diversity between and within new communities and that targeted engagement may be necessary. For example, certain cultural or ethnic groups may not naturally mix. Be aware of this, do your research and speak to people who work in the sector.
- **5** Be aware of special days or events that may clash with your event (such as cultural days, celebrations or religious festivals).
- **6** Use existing networks and groups as a way to connect with newly arrived people. Organisations include Sligo Intercultural Project and Diversity Sligo.
- **7** Some people may not be comfortable in a mixed gender forum. It may be appropriate to run women or men only engagement activities. Again check with the group you are targeting.
- **8** Allowing participants to take photos can be a great way to break down language barriers and encourage community members to actively participate in and interpret their neighbourhood. Always get GDPR (The General Data Protection Regulation) consent.
- **9** Promote your engagement event or activity in ethnic media including multilingual community radio and community newspapers, ethnic shops etc.
- **10** Understand that people may be experiencing trauma or difficulties in the settlement process. These experiences are different for everyone, but be aware of this and adapt your methods accordingly. Know when to seek help or professional support.

OLDER PEOPLE

Sligo is one of the oldest counties in Ireland with 29.5% of the population over the age of 55. This compares to the state average of 24%.

Sligo has a 30% higher proportion of older people living alone than would be expected for it's share of the population. 1.79% versus 1.38%.

- **1** Make older people aware that their input and ideas are valued and recognise that their contribution is just as important as everyone else.
- 2 Older people can be busy and members of a range of groups or clubs. Before duplicating engagement, you should first contact key networks such as Active Retirement Ireland, Sligo PPN, Sligo Leader Partnership and Go For Life clubs who offer a great mechanism to tap into a captive audience.
- **3** Send older people a letter inviting them to participate, a personal invitation always works best.
- 4 Consider organising your engagement exercise in partnership with local clubs or organisations, but make sure not to ask too much of people, resources can be limited.
- **5** Provide refreshments at your event, meeting or discussion. Sharing a chat over tea or coffee and food can be a great way to engage older people and create a relaxed environment.
- 6 Some older people may have great stories and experiences, take the time to listen. One-on-one engagement may be the best way to make sure you have the time to hear these stories.
- 7 Choose an appropriate venue for your consultation including one that is located in a familiar, safe setting and that is close to public transport. Always consult with groups such as LocalLink about existing transport routes and make sure the venue has good access and is comfortable.
- **8** Consider the time of day of your event. Evening events may not be appropriate, as some older people may not feel comfortable or safe going out at night.
- **9** Recognise that similar engagement may have happened in the past. There is no point starting from scratch if there have been numerous conversations about the same issue over the years there is a risk of consultation fatigue this group have heard it all before. Recognise this and explain why this engagement is different and how the outcomes will be used.
- 10 Most likely, language that uses jargon won't be well received by older people. Refer to the "Sligo Making our Written Publications Socially Inclusive Guide" on the internet http://www.sligoppn.com/useful-information/



Under the Equality Act 2010, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which "has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

Increasingly, disabilities that fall within this fundamental definition are invisible and/or hidden to others while being completely debilitating to those affected. The message is the same, don't presume and always ask about specific needs people might have.

FACTS

- In Sligo 14.9% of the population have a disability, higher than the average of 13.5%
- Sligo has an 8% higher proportion of disabled persons than would be expected for its share of the national population: 1.38% versus 1.49%
- 4.7% of people in Sligo are acting as carers compared with
 4.1% national average

PEOPLE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY

- If you are not sure of people's communication or mobility requirements, it is better to ask than assume. ALWAYS find out about the nature of the disabilities of potential participants so you can adapt your engagement process accordingly. If you are unsure check with a local disability organisation.
- 2 Be considerate of the fact that people living with disabilities may need more time to voice their opinions, may prefer to provide feedback in written format or may need questions on the discussion topic forwarded ahead of time to prepare their contribution.
- 3 Interpreters or hearing loops may be required for meetings if people with hearing issues are attending. If an interpreter is present speak clearly and a little slower than you would usually to give them time to translate. Written material may need to be in large font for people who have a vision impairment.
- 4 The venue should be located near public transport and have suitable access for wheelchair buses or maxi-taxis to stop nearby. Check the venue's accessibility for the little things: Can the door to the toilet be opened independently? Are there enough accessible car parking spaces and wheelchair spaces? Is the lift working and is it okay for large scooters?
- Very early events such as breakfasts may not be suitable for people with disabilities where it takes additional time to get ready and to get transport to an event. Equally, evening events may not allow enough time before and after events for people to negotiate peak hour traffic, transport and taxis. Check most suitable times.
- **6** Where possible, travel to your participants. It is easier for two able bodied people to travel than 10 people with disabilities all requiring different travel needs.
- **7** Attendant carers may be required for people with higher needs and need to be actively included in the process.
- **8** Be aware that temperature may be an issue as some people with disabilities have temperature sensitivities. Again, always check.
- **9** Consider that people may have different eating requirements and catering should be carefully selected. Drinking straws should also be provided for people who may have limited mobility.
- 10 Social media and online forums can help increase accessibility for people with a disability. The internet can help break down barriers for people who might otherwise find it difficult to travel to and participate in traditional engagement activities.



FACT

- Irish Travellers enumerated in April 2016 was 30,987 representing 0.7 per cent of the general population.
- 3% The percentage of Irish Travellers who were aged 65 or over in 2016. The equivalent rate for the general population was 13.3%.
- 78.6% of Irish Travellers are based in urban areas. The comparable rate for the general population is 62.4%.
- 384 individuals or 0.59% of Sligo's population are Travellers, lower than the national average of 0.65%.

TRAVELLERS

- 1 Network with local Traveller services and development organisations such as the Sligo Traveller Support Group as they already have strong links to Traveller communities in the county. They should be your first point of contact for all consultation and engagement processes.
- 2 Always check the preferred method of communication before starting the process. For each consultation you intend to run, check with an organisation such as STSG (Sligo Traveller Support Group) for guidance around the best method to use for particular target groups.
- 3 Avoid Jargon and acronyms and provide an explanation for terms that some people may not be familiar with such as "youth work" or "community development". Where you do have to use an acronym always have a breakdown sheet available for people.
- 4 Do not just rely on the internet. Some Travellers do not have regular access to broadband or wi-fi so, again, always ask whether this method suits specific families.
- **5** Go and visit Travellers where they live. Get to know them and their families. Like with most consultations, people are more engaged in familiar surroundings.
- 6 Realise that social and consultation events can be daunting for some people. Try to always create safe spaces where people feel free and confident to speak and accommodate requests around this where possible. Recognise that the policies and practices your organisation would usually use for consultation may be unfamiliar and therefore will not encourage discussion.
- 7 Any cultural questions you want to ask must be appropriate to the consultation/engagement in question and should only be raised at cultural events.
- **8** It is inappropriate to ask personal questions. Discussions around personal experiences must be freely offered by members of the community, not initiated by you.
- **9** Be flexible. Use a variety of methods to engage with the Traveller Community, based on guidance from an organisation such as STSG. You may follow a process of starting with texts, followed up with a phone call and then a visit. This is not only effective but also demonstrates a commitment to really hearing what the community has to say.
- 10 Always check with an organisation like STSG in terms of the compatibility of different Traveller communities in Sligo. More traditional methods of holding events on a geographical basis will not work. STSG are well respected in the community and will also be able to help encourage conversations between your organisation and members of the traveller community.

LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES

What does the 'Q' stand for?

Q can mean either 'questioning' or 'queer,'

People use the term queer because it's not specific to sexual orientation or to gender identity but is more of an umbrella term that can encompass a lot of people.

"Queer means that you are one of those letters (LGBT), but you could be all of those letters and not knowing is OK,"



- 1 The language we use to discuss LGBTQ+ issues has evolved over the years—and it continues to change. It's important you use terminology that resonates with LGBTQ+ individuals at the time of engagement.
- 2 Don't assume you know a person's gender. At the outset of engagement activities, it's important to ask people what their pronouns are (e.g. he/him/his, she/her, they/them/their). This is one of the most fundamental ways you can show respect, because it demonstrates you respect them for who they are.
- 3 Existing LGBTQ+ organisations can help to make contact with LGBTQ+ members of the community and can support you to carry out research. LGBTQ+ community organisations should not just be contacted when your organisation wants to carry out a piece of consultation, LGBTQ+ community organisations provide a key support and advocacy role for the community. Build positive and long-term relationships with these organisations.
- **4** Try to make consultation a fun experience for those taking part. For meetings and focus groups, include ice breaker and interactive exercises.
- **5** Avoid creating an environment where heterosexuality represents a standard of some kind, and that all other sexual orientations, if acknowledged at all, are merely a deviation from this.
- 6 Don't just consult on topics that are 'issues' to LGBTQ+ people. Give opportunities for LGBTQ+ people to talk positively about their identity and experiences as an LGBTQ+ person. LGBTQ+ people are not 'victims' or a 'special group', they have insights and talents like everyone else and are effected by the same issues we all are.
- 7 You can show that you have an understanding of LGBTQ+ issues by displaying LGBTQ+-inclusive materials, such as safe space or LGBTQ+ ally stickers, posters, etc. This can be a way to openly demonstrate your inclusiveness and respect of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **8** Be discreet about advertising details about venues, times and dates. Ensure that any advertising for your consultation event contains LGBTQ+ friendly imagery.
- **9** LGBTQ+ commercial or community venues are good places to carry out your consultation as they are often a focus for the LGBTQ+ community and are a 'safe' space. Evening meetings will enable more people to attend.
- 10 Celebrate LGBTQ+ life in the same way that other diversity in the community is celebrated. Mark days of significance, such as LGBTQ+ Pride (June) and International Day Against Homophobia (May).

THE BEREAVED

- 1 Provide opportunities for people to talk about the past, their loss and how they are feeling. Often, it's not until they have shared their story and memories that the bereaved are able to look to the future.
- **2** Take time to talk and listen, don't rush. The bereavement process is different for different people, and it may not be obvious how people are coping or feeling.
- **3** Expect to invest a lot more time into the listening process over a much longer period. Use creative techniques for the bereaved to share their memories. For example, murals, scrapbooks and digital stories.
- 4 Consider that people may not be ready to commit to too much, too quickly. Let people commit to what they can. Use techniques such as listening posts or 'drop in' sessions where people can decide how much they are willing to contribute at that time.
- **5** Be particularly careful with the language you use, for example, "how are you?" might be better phrased as "how are you today?"
- **6** Use reflection and ask open-ended questions (what, how, describe, tell me...) that will draw out more detail about the things people are describing.
- 7 Use images as a tool to facilitate conversation. A person in mourning may not have the capacity to engage in lengthy conversations. Images are a way for people to express what they like, dislike and hope for the future. Images are especially effective if the engagement has a focus on developing a shared vision.
- **8** As practitioners, engaging those who have suffered a loss can be emotionally draining. Debrief with a friend or colleague.
- **9** Don't use platitudes or comparisons.
- **10** Don't push your agenda be prepared that you might have to cut the consultation short and try again at another date that better suits the individual.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

FACTS

 In August 2019 it was estimated that there were over 900 people living with dementia in Sligo





- 1 Don't assume that a person with dementia no longer has any skills or abilities. Many people with dementia can still engage in everyday activities, but might need some support.
- 2 Some people with dementia may experience communication difficulties, so it's important to communicate clearly. In some cases it may be helpful to provide a written outline beforehand. Others may find this puts too much pressure on them. Find out what works best for the individual, everyone living with dementia is different.
- 3 Resources such as pictures, word cards and objects can be helpful for stimulating conversation and interaction for some people. These need to be carefully chosen, ensure they are meaningful to that person and avoid images that can be misunderstood or that are childish or patronising.
- 4 Find out if anyone has any communication problems and think about how they might be supported. A group situation can encourage creativity and being part of a supportive group may also boost people's confidence. However people with pronounced communication difficulties and those who need a lot of support to give their views may find group working more difficult.
- Working with individuals one-to-one allows them to go through the document in their own time and in the comfort of their own home. Many people with dementia will be supported to work through the document by a family carer or friend.
- **6** Reading long, complicated documents can prove challenging for some people with dementia. Write a summary or only ask for views on specific sections of the document.
- **7** Ask people how they would like the consultation documents to be delivered. Remember that many people do not use or have access to the internet. And those who do may have trouble opening email attachments and may not be happy printing out more than one page.
- **8** Consider setting up a telephone or personal interview to gather individual views if the person with dementia prefers this.
- **9** Think of the environment, ensure no trip hazards, clean up clutter and ensure the area is well lit.
- **10** Make every effort to also engage with carers, these are the people often impacted the most by current service delivery and the accessibility of community opportunities.

CHILDREN

For the purpose of this document we are defining children as 12 and under.

This group represents 17.3% (11, 625) of the
 Sligo population

- 1 Always ask parents or care takers for permission before consulting with children. Know the legalities do you need to be Garda vetted for the engagement process you are planning. Always have plenty of GDPR consent forms on hand. Sligo PPN has a template for this.
- 2 Think about attracting the parents, then talking to the children. An option is using role models as a way of attracting involvement from both parents and kids.
- **3** Be creative and allow for creativity. Colour, pictures, images and stickers are just some of the tools children may feel comfortable with.
- **4** Bring in a 'play' element if possible. Lego will instantly attract young children. It is familiar and fun and can be used for a range of discussions.
- 5 Distribute posters to local schools with options about a topic or issue and ask children to vote on preferences. Posters can be designed to target different age groups through the graphics, diagrams and language used.
- 6 Primary schools and the school network is a fantastic resource to tap into. Some schools may even be willing to include your project in their curriculum.
- 7 Story telling can be used as a way to explain complex ideas. It's also a fun way to get children involved. Drama or role playing is also a creative way for children to express their ideas and act out possible scenarios.
- 8 Think about the type of social media that children use today, are there Cojo Dojo groups operating in the area you can tap into?
- **9** Allowing flexibility and creativity for both parents and children to be involved encourages no-one to be excluded and for children to feel safe and confident in any situation.
- **10** Walking tours or treasure hunts in your local area or park may be a great way to get children talking about their neighbourhood. It can also help you to understand how children perceive and interpret their environment.

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YOUNG PEOPLE

CYPSC

Children and Young People's Services Committees



FACT

This group represents 9.3% (6,108) of the Sligo population

- 1 Spend the time to build confidence. Most young people are not used to participating in a public forum, but given the training, support and the opportunity, they often rise to the challenge with surprising results.
- 2 Make sure the promotional material is eye-catching and appealing to young people. Look at other promotional material targeting young people for ideas.
- 3 Don't dumb down the information. Young people have a lot to contribute and can understand complex issues if given the chance.
- **4** There are many existing school networks or youth groups out there. Always connect with CYPSC (Children & Young People's Services Committee), Comhairle na nÓg, Youthreach, Foróige, Youth Work Ireland-North Connaght and other local groups for advice.
- 5 Commitment needs to be short-term and finite. Long-term commitments or timeframes aren't attractive to young people.
- **6** Young people like to create. This may include traditional creative activities like music, dance, radio, theatre or art or newer social media activities.
- 7 Young people like to know they are being listened to. Recognise their contribution and be explicit about the benefits of participating and how their input will be used. ALWAYS FEED BACK.
- 8 Online forums and social networks can be a quick and easy way to connect with and engage young people. For example, many young people are connected via instant messaging services, Facebook, Snapchat and WhatsApp. You need to change the way you think about traditional consultation being the gathering of people in one room. Online communities are important to tap into.
- **9** If you are organising a focus group with young people try to have no more than a few years age difference amongst participants.
- **10** Most important avoid bureaucracy and too much paperwork.

FACT

As of January 2019 nearly 10,000 people were recorded as homeless in Ireland, roughly 4% of these are in the Western Region.



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HOMELESS PEOPLE

- Support services can be a good place to start your engagement. Contact Sligo County Council Housing Unit or services operating in the community.
- **2** Consider undertaking vox pops or surveys at outreach services or community centres. It is much better to go to people, rather than wait for them to attend a meeting or forum.
- **3** Before starting your engagement, do your research. People who are homeless may have complex emotional and health issues which could impede the level of participation in an engagement activity.
- 4 Ask local support services for incentive ideas to participate in more structured engagement such as a focus group. For some people an incentive such as a food voucher can make a huge difference.
- **5** Display information in community centres or outreach centres. The display can be staffed at appropriate times to engage homeless and to have a discussion in a comfortable, familiar and neutral environment.
- **6** Use the engagement exercise as a capacity building opportunity by increasing the confidence of participants. Using community members who are homeless to undertake the engagement may be a good way to actively encourage involvement in the project.
- **7** Consider one-on-one conversations and take your time. Always ask how people would like their story to be displayed or written. Let people talk about what they want and allow people to tell their stories.
- **8** Have a chat over food and a tea or coffee. This can help normalise the conversation and make everyone relaxed.
- **9** Go for a walk and allow people to talk about their surroundings. This can provide a different perspective on the community and local area.
- **10** Recognise that professional help may be required if serious issues emerge. Listen to concerns, issues or problems, but if you don't have the appropriate skills, make sure you refer them to someone who can help.

Name	Email Address	Phone Number
Sligo PPN Network	ppn@sligococo.ie	071-9114430
Sligo County Council	info@sligococo.ie	071-9111111
Sligo Family Resource Centre	sligofrc@gmail.com	071-9146315
Sligo Intercultural Project	sligofrc.intercultural@gmail.com	087-3395469
Diversity Sligo	help@diversitysligo.ie	086-2325951
Active Retirement Ireland	info@activeirl.ie	01-8733836
Sligo Leader Partnership	info@sligoleader.com	071-9141138
Go For Life Clubs		071-9161511
Sligo Local Link	sligo@locallink.ie	071-9650437
Disability Federation of Ireland	info@disability-federation.ie	01-4547978
Sligo Traveller Support Group	stsg@eircom.net	071-9145780
Children & Young Peoples services Committees- Sligo	maeve.whittington@tusla.ie	
071-9137620		
Comhairle na nOg- Sligo	elaine. granaghan@foroige.ie	071-9146526

Youthreach- Sligo	sligoyouthreach@msletb.ie	071-9144248
Foroige	siobhan.flanagan@foroige.ie	086-0227986
Youth Work Ireland- North Connaught	yicsligo@gmail.com	071-9144150
Dunally Day Care Centre Sligo		071-9146400
Sligo Alzheimer Cafe		071-9146400
Age Friendly Ireland	info@agefriendlyireland.ie	046-9097000
Northwest LGBT Pride		087-9890336
Northwest Simon Community	info@northwestsimon.ie	071-9147522
Sligo Social Services	info@sligosocialservices.ie	071-9145682
I See Beyond	support@iseebeyond.ie	iseebeyond.ie
Acquired Brain Injury Sligo	toboyle@abiireland.ie	087-2601827
Invisable Disability	www.invisibledisabilities.org	
Outwest	outwest.ie	094-9372479
Northwest LGBT Pride		087-9890336

With thanks to Sligo Traveller Support Group Youth Work Ireland – North Connaght Sligo Intercultural Project Comhairle na nOg Children and Young People's Services Committees Disability Federation of Ireland Age Friendly Ireland **Dunally Day Care Centre Foroige** Sligo Family Resource Centre The Health Service Executive Sligo County Council

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