

The 'Ladder' of Engagement

Consultation, participation or partnership ?

There are numerous 'models' or classifications which try to distinguish between different 'levels' of engaging with stakeholders. Below is 'menu' based on Arnstein's ladder of engagement which can help identify the kind of engagement you are really seeking.

The draw back of the "ladder" is an implied hierarchy but that is not the case - the important thing is to be clear about what you are trying to achieve with both yourself and those you are involving. Different 'types' are appropriate at different times and in different situations.

Information	<p>Providing information. (E.g. about the existence of a service, results of a decision).</p> <p>Tends to be one way communication</p>
Education	<p>Explaining or raising awareness of something - often in order to change attitudes/action.</p> <p>Tends to be one-way communication</p>
Consultation	<p>Asking opinions. This can include questionnaires asking for reactions to a particular decision, voting, market research, focus groups and debate.</p> <p>Can be two way communication (e.g. if participants are informed of the results) but final decisions are made by those who are doing the consulting.</p>
Involvement	<p>Where more than just opinions are sought – participants may be part of the solution though taking action, endorsing something, etc.</p> <p>Communication must be two way, but responsibilities are not necessarily formally set out and relationships between participants may remain unclear.</p>
Partnership	<p>Direct involvement in decision making and action, with all parties having clear roles and responsibilities and powers – usually for a defined purpose/shared common goal.</p> <p>Two-way communication essential.</p>
Devolved Power	<p>Giving away decision making, resources and control.</p> <p>There should also be clear lines of accountability and should involve two way communication with those giving away the power.</p>