

Better Together

A Practical Guide to Effective Engagement with Older People



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Message from the Minister

As active citizens, workers, volunteers, employers, carers, neighbours, friends and family older South Australians have shaped the society we live in today and will continue to have a role in helping us shape our future. Government at all levels need to include the diverse voices of the state's older population in our work to ensure our policies, programs and services are relevant and work for the people across the life cycle.

Effective engagement with older people involves actively listening and genuinely responding to what matters to them most. It is open, inclusive and supports a dynamic dialogue between government and the community.

Engagement is not only about giving older people a voice, it is about ensuring older people are valued and respectfully included in the decisions that ultimately affect them. It is about building genuine partnerships with older people to benefit them, the work that we do and the community we live in.

Office for the Ageing (OFTA) has recently implemented a Stakeholder Engagement Framework as part of its ongoing commitment to genuine community engagement.

This Better Together guide is underpinned by the OFTA Framework as well as the South Australian Government's Better Together Principles of Engagement. It is a result of collaborative work between OFTA and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and, most importantly, is informed by older South Australians. We have been listening to older people and are committed to making this an all-ages-friendly South Australia through effective engagement.

I am pleased to support *Better Together: A Practical Guide to Effective Engagement with Older People* and encourage its use to guide and support mutually respectful relationships as we continue to create an all-ages-friendly community.

I encourage you to bring the voices of a diverse range of older people into your thinking, policies, and projects so we can create a shared intergenerational vision for our state.

Hon Zoe Bettison MP
Minister for Ageing

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Introduction

The State Government is committed to engaging with *all* South Australians and this document is a guide on how to effectively engage with older South Australians.

Better Together: A Practical Guide to Effective Engagement with Older People has been developed in partnership between Office for the Ageing (OFTA), Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC), and older South Australians.

This guide supports *Prosperity Through Longevity: South Australia's Ageing Plan, Our Vision 2014-2019*. It provides state government with a guide to genuinely engage with older people and to support them as active, connected, experienced and empowered individuals and citizens.

It contains tips and information about who our state's older people are, why engagement is important and some of the ways in which we can undertake successful and genuine engagements and consultations.

The guide supports our belief that including older people in the decisions that ultimately affect them results in better decisions and outcomes for older people and the South Australian community as a whole.

How older people have informed this resource?

Capturing the voices of South Australia's older people has been a vital component in the development of this resource. It has been broadly informed by what we have learned from past consultations, surveys and focus groups with older South Australians on a range of issues, including the Office for the Ageing Feedback Network - which comprises more than 1,700 older people - as well as older people involved through our partner organisations. This resource has also been informed by focus group discussions with older people.

Principles of engagement

This guide is based on the South Australian Government's *Better Together Principles of Engagement*.



More information about the Better Together Principles of Engagement can be found at www.bettertogether.sa.gov.au

These principles are a foundation of this document and are reflected in processes, hints and tips for successful and meaningful engagement.

Photo credit: C.Francis



2 Who are older people?

Older people, those aged over 50, make up approximately a third of our state's diverse population. Each older South Australian is a unique individual with a unique life story. It is therefore vital to acknowledge these individual characteristics when we are engaging with them. There is no universally agreed definition of older people, however, generally this group is defined as 50 years or older. For the first time in history, three generations form part of the older cohort. Demographers have split these groups into three categories below.

However, it is important to note that where someone may fit in terms of age does not necessarily reflect 'typical' characteristics of a group and that there is diversity in background, interests and experiences.

For those in the 50–70 age group – preparing for their third age, sharing the experience of their working lives, still working, retraining, retirement, caring, the sandwich generation looking after parents and their grandchildren. This group may be more familiar with social media and other technologies.

For those in the 70–85 age group – facing new independence or challenges with mobility and health, caring for long-term partners and friends, new opportunities on the horizon in travel or economic disadvantage.

For those over 85 – beginning a golden era of wisdom, gratitude, while facing deeper challenges of meaning, health, economic disadvantage.

Be careful of stereotypes

We are all ageing. Age is an opportunity and not something that we should deny or can prevent. As we embrace ageing, there are many things we can learn, appreciate and share about our lives and life experiences. Many older people have substantial amounts of health and vigour and may have more free time than younger people. However, despite their capacity, they may be discouraged from active engagement in community life through informal barriers such as ageist attitudes.

Age-based stereotypes or ageist attitudes also influence whether a person's talents, contributions and feelings are acknowledged. It has been shown that the stereotypes people hold of older adults influence how we talk to them, present information (to or about them) and even the topics of conversation or consultation. This may include questions that are asked and responses that are encouraged.

Stereotypes are defined as oversimplified, exaggerated beliefs about a group or category of people. Stereotypes may be positive or negative, but they are nearly always distortions of fact. Many stereotypes or myths surround older people and the ageing process.



Photo credit: J.Emery

10 common myths about older people

- ① Most older people live in institutions.
- ② Retirement is less difficult for women than it is for men.
- ③ Dementia, sickness and disability is to be expected or comes with old age.
- ④ Older workers are less productive than younger workers.
- ⑤ Older people cannot learn, are set in their ways, unable to change.
- ⑥ Older people are weak, helpless, sweet, kind, at peace with the world.
- ⑦ Older people are boring, forgetful, unproductive, grouchy and cantankerous.
- ⑧ Old age begins at 60.
- ⑨ Older people are past being consulted about anything – even their own lives.
- ⑩ The majority of older people see themselves as being in poor health, are lonely, and isolated from families/friends.

Excerpt from the Senior Citizen Times (2011) <https://the-senior-citizen-times.com/2011/11/23/top-20-stereotypes-of-older-people/>

Fortunately, there are ways to counteract these negative stereotypes. A powerful way to demonstrate respect for others is to move past labels and treat people as individuals with unique experiences, preferences, and interests. Begin by examining your own ideas about other age groups.

Challenge stereotypes

Treat everyone as an individual

Assess how age stereotypes may impact your views

Encourage others to reject age stereotypes

3 What older people tell us

Just with any other age group – one size does not fit all

Listen well	Older people have a wealth of knowledge, life experience and expertise, absorb it and use it.
Show respect	Say hello and be respectful, this is appreciated by people of all ages.
Be accessible and keep traditional communications alive	While many older people are online, some still rely on traditional forms of communication. This may include face-to-face, post/mail, newspapers, printed material and phone. Keep this in mind to ensure you are inclusive of people who may not be physically mobile or who are not online.
Clarity	Keep communication clear, open and in plain respectful language. Fonts need to be large and easy to read. Try to avoid colours that are hard to read.
Run conferences, focus groups and workshops	Older people are often very willing to come along and provide valuable input into what you are engaging on or informing them about.
Think country	Keep in mind people who live regionally, use your contacts or other organisations if resources/budgets are limited.
Go to them	Get out into the community, speak to people.
Think diversity	Consider the best ways to be inclusive of a diverse range of older people and how to address any barriers they may have to participating.
Be culturally aware	Engage in ways that are culturally appropriate and sensitive to the needs of older people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.

Third party support

When targeting people who are frail, who have cognitive impairment or where there is little English spoken also consider the appropriateness of including a support person in the process. This may be a family member of the older person or a representative of an organisation.

Decision makers in the room

Where possible, have the decision makers actively participating in the engagement. It shows that you are taking the engagement seriously.

Older person-led engagements

Include older people (with lived experience) in the engagement process and support them to run engagements where appropriate. It's important to ensure adequate training and support is provided to the older people running engagements.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) and safety

This is the first generation of people who are out. They have lived this transition bravely and are aware of becoming more vulnerable as they age in a community that still hasn't fully embraced gender and sexuality diversity. Where some of us might be working out how to create the most enticing forms of community engagement they ask us to make it *safe* first.

When developing surveys include 'Do not identify with a gender' as an option as intersex is not an identity, it is a biological reality.

Assumptions

Don't assume that because people are older or may have a disability that they aren't able to contribute and add value. Sometimes we just need to take a little extra time. Don't make assumptions about marital status, sexuality and the existence of children either.



"To make it [engagements] enticing, the most important thing is to feel one's input is valued."

Focus group participant

4 Why is engagement with older people important?

Everyone has rights. And these rights do not diminish as people age. This includes the right to participation, to have one's views sought and valued, to make decisions and have a say in government decision-making. Older people are the experts on what is important to them. Engaging with older people can help to dispel myths and stereotypes associated with ageing. By engaging with older people, using the *Better Together Principles of Engagement*, many benefits are realised for older adults, government and the broader community. The community as a whole also benefits from engagement with older people, in particular the shared sense of values and commitment in matters that relate to all people, no matter what age.

Benefits for older people

- Feel valued for their insights, input and life experience
- Increased confidence, enjoyment of life, and improved health and wellbeing
- Opportunities to express their needs and ideas
- Increased trust in government, feel like someone is really listening
- Help to develop age-friendly and intergenerational-friendly communities which reflects the lived experiences, needs and aspirations of older people

Benefits for government

- Learn from older people's diverse knowledge, experience and insights
- Understand the opportunities of a large and growing consumer market
- Learn from experienced change agents – civil rights, environmental and gender equity activism were all driven by Baby Boomers
- Increase older people's confidence in the openness of government to community ideas
- Be at the front of a whole new approach of ageing

Benefits for the community

Learn from older people's diverse knowledge, experience and insights

Older people can contribute to the community regardless of age, e.g. in times of disaster, volunteering

All-ages-friendly communities are good for all generations.

Intergenerational participation supports community cohesion, social capital and ownership over decisions

Improves the quality of decisions and outcomes for communities

Doing it together

Undertaking a partnership approach with older people means that the outcomes and benefits are shared. Treating older people as equals along with other stakeholders is important to increase trust, collaborative working relationships and genuine partnerships.



Photo credit: D.Mundy

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How to engage with older people

Tips for engagement

With the rich diversity that older people bring, there are also many ways in which engagement can be delivered. Some things to keep in mind with any consultation include:

- information is clear and concise and in plain language
- barriers (physical, technological, language or otherwise) are identified and addressed
- negative attitudes to ageing or older people are identified and addressed to ensure this does not affect the process or outcome of the engagement or consultation
- avoid stereotyping older people – see pages 4-5 for more information
- language used is respectful e.g. try to avoid terms such as ‘the elderly’, ‘old people’, ‘the aged’.

What older people tell us

Technology

While many older people are online, many still may not have access to the internet or have full confidence or skills in using it. Baby Boomers are more likely to be ‘tech-savvy’ however, many middle or older adults may not be. Ensure you have considered how best to engage with these groups and consider technology assistance support.

Local engage

Engaging with local communities and connecting with their existing events may make it easier for you to reach certain older people. Liaise with local governments and organisations to determine effective ways to engage with older people in their community.

Accessibility

Some older people may have challenges with mobility or may be frail, therefore choose venues that are accessible and offer reimbursement for travel costs where possible/applicable. Engagement methods and techniques need to consider the needs of the audience and the varying skills and abilities of the participants.

Venue

Venues need to be safe (both physically and emotionally), comfortable, accessible, and local if possible and accommodate for varying abilities, eg hearing loops available and interpreters. Consider community venues such as halls, pubs, clubs and cafes. Also, consider how you express genuine hospitality through the process.

Timing

Daytime activities may be more suitable for older people and those who rely on public transport. South Australians Seniors Card holders are entitled to free off peak Adelaide Metro public transport and discounts at other times. For more information visit www.sa.gov.au/seniorcard. The 50-70 age group may prefer other times, such as after work or weekends, due to work and caring commitments during weekdays.

Hospitality

As most people will be giving up their time at no cost, consider catering your engagement events and offering refreshments.



"[Government needs to] be prepared to come out, from their offices and talk/see people and not have a barrier."

Focus group participant



Communicating with older people

Language matters— When you are engaging or communicating with older South Australians it is important to keep language in mind. The way we describe older people matters particularly in either supporting stereotypes and ageist attitudes or challenging these. The term ‘the elderly’ may convey frailty and feebleness and can be viewed as negative. ‘Senior’ may be more acceptable, as it reflects a higher position in society. Older people, people who are 50+ or 60+ or older adults are other alternatives. Whichever terms you use it is important to remember that older people are as diverse as the community they live in, for example in culture, ethnicity, sexuality, education, interests, health, well-being, participation, lifestyle and life experience.

Some common ways to communicate with older people include the following. Keep these in mind when planning an engagement or consultation.

Face-to-face engagement	Either individual or in focus groups.
User-friendly formats	Large, clear print.
Visual messaging	A picture can tell an important story; images and photos should reflect the diversity of older people, not stereotypes.
Media types	Local radio, ethnic radio, papers and print, word of mouth.
Existing local networks	Local governments, social clubs, seniors clubs.
Email and electronic newsletters	Weekend Plus – OFTA’s digital magazine distributed to 55,000 seniors card members.
Surveys	Online or hardcopy at events/conferences/waiting areas.
Forums	Provide information and invite questions from older people.
Peer led consultations	Engage older people to help facilitate conversations with older people. This helps with trust and may contribute to more influence and participation.
Over the phone	This is a quick and easy, traditional and effective two-way communication tool.
Skype/Google hangouts	Use new technologies to engage where appropriate.

6 Are we doing it right?

Models for engagement with older people

How do we know that we are engaging with our older South Australians in the best way possible? Best practice tools are a good way to check.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is a widely used model that provides a framework on how government can effectively engage the community in decision-making processes. The model is presented as a ‘spectrum’ designed to assist the user in identifying and selecting the level of engagement based on the role of the community in your engagement process.

Think about your goal – this will help you to determine how you will deliver the engagement.

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision-making including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations and provide feedback on how public input influenced public decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	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.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum possible extent.	We will implement what you decide.

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Photo credit: P. Mosel



7 Engagement scenarios and methods

Exploring different scenarios helps to demonstrate best practice and the ways in which you can support engagement with older people, within your resources and timeframes. Here are some examples of engagement methods and scenarios describing how they have been applied.

Using multiple methods of engagement increases the opportunities for a diverse range of older people to participate.

While each of the following scenarios has a focus on ageing policy, it is important to remember that older people are interested in and should be engaged in a range of matters across all topic areas.

Whole of population engagement should reflect the contributions of older people as they make up one third of our state's population!

Focus groups

A group of older people (small to medium) explore and respond to an issue in a structured and facilitated way.

Cost = Medium Time = Medium

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful for a detailed analysis of a particular issue • Can involve training and the use of peer facilitators • Can trigger further discussion and group interaction.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be statistically representative of all older people • May not be a suitable forum for older people to discuss personal issues.
Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups should be used as a part of a larger engagement process to analyse and comment on particular issues. • To increase representativeness, peak, community sector organisations and schools can run focus groups.



Stop Elder Abuse Public Awareness Campaign Material – Office for the Ageing

The ‘Elder Abuse Can Be Stopped’ campaign was developed to raise community awareness about Elder Abuse by recognising the signs of Elder Abuse and where to seek information and support. To ensure that the creative/campaign material for the awareness campaign was effective and engaging to the target population group - older people and their family carers – expressions of interest were sought from OFTA’s Feedback Network to participate in a focus group. As a result four separate focus groups were conducted with older people, diverse in ages and backgrounds. Four options for the campaign creative were presented to the participants who were asked to give feedback on each design and its initial impact on them. The final design was chosen as a direct result of the focus group feedback which emphasised the importance of simplicity in message and design.

What worked?

- The face-to-face nature of a focus group encouraged honest and natural feedback/reactions.
- Providing clear information about the overarching topic (in this case Elder Abuse), allowing sufficient discussion time for each topic/matter (in this case what they liked on first exposure to the creative and its impact on them).
- Allowing members to provide written feedback after their initial exposure.

What would make it better next time?

- Ensuring the focus groups includes a greater level of cultural and social diversity.

Forums

Large groups of people come together to explore and share ideas about a topic or an issue. Forums are facilitated and usually involve the development of solutions and decisions. Note a public meeting format is not recommended as a forum.

Cost = High Time = High

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can involve a large representative sample of older people• Allows older people the opportunity to interact with other people• Can develop the communication skills of older people• Can be empowering for older people if they are able to influence the forum's agenda and contribute to the outcomes.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May not be a suitable forum for older people to discuss personal issues• Forums need substantial planning• Not everyone feels comfortable speaking in front of a large group.
Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure older people are adequately prepared to discuss the issues• Creative presentations can be part of the forum and inspire discussions• Break into smaller groups.



City of Salisbury, Age-friendly Community Consultations – City of Salisbury

The City of Salisbury conducted an Age-friendly Community Forum to seek the views of 90 older people and interested community members on what were the most positive aspects of living in Salisbury, and areas for improvement. The views were then used to inform the development of the Age-friendly Salisbury Strategy 2015-2020, released in April 2016.

What worked?

- The community forums and meetings resulting in a broad range of older people having a say in shaping the community and the future actions for the City of Salisbury to commit to and implement through its Age-friendly strategy. These actions were also relevant to older people's needs and expectations.

What would make it better next time?

- Invest in on-going relationship building processes with older people outside of scheduled and structured engagement processes. Having a chat or cup of coffee with older residents is as valuable in relationship building as a formal invitation to be a part of the 'consultation' process.

Interviews

Provides older people with the opportunity to have a face-to-face discussion regarding a particular topic or issue. The interview can be informal or formal and structured.

Cost = Medium Time = High

Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide participants with opportunities to talk about issues that may be difficult in large groups • Can be a comfortable and relaxed process that inspires a rapport with the interviewer and participant.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will not be representative of all older people • Can be intimidating to some older people who have little to no experience with being interviewed and older people with limited English skills. • No group interaction or ability to talk or brainstorm ideas with other people • Unsuitable if a large sample is needed • Unsuitable if the participant or government has limited time • Can be difficult to recruit interviewees.
Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreters or bilingual interviewers can be used for Aboriginal and CALD participants where required • Provide some skill development for the participant particularly if they have never been interviewed before.



D3 Innovation in Ageing Challenge – Office for the Ageing & Office for Digital Government

The D3 Innovation in Ageing Challenge brought together aspiring digital entrepreneurs with people from the community, industry and academia, to Discuss, Design and Deliver (D3) solutions to achieve active ageing outcomes for older South Australians.

OFTA South Australian Seniors Card members were invited to participate in interviews as ‘life experts’ to explore their views on the definition of ‘active ageing’, use of digital tools and the internet. An initial survey was used to recruit people interested in participating in face to face interviews with teams competing in the D3 Innovation in Ageing Challenge. The purpose was to give life to survey data through the sharing of life experiences of older individuals to inspire and inform the innovative ideas and solutions developed through the challenge.

What worked?

- Conducting an initial survey to facilitate expressions of interest. This assisted in overcoming the potential barrier of recruiting interviewees.
- Giving a face and real life experiences to otherwise abstract data sets gathered through a survey – thereby countering stereotypes and assumptions in the design phase of the challenge.

What would make it better next time?

- More time for interviews to allow for a greater degree of sharing between the life experts and the Challenge team members.

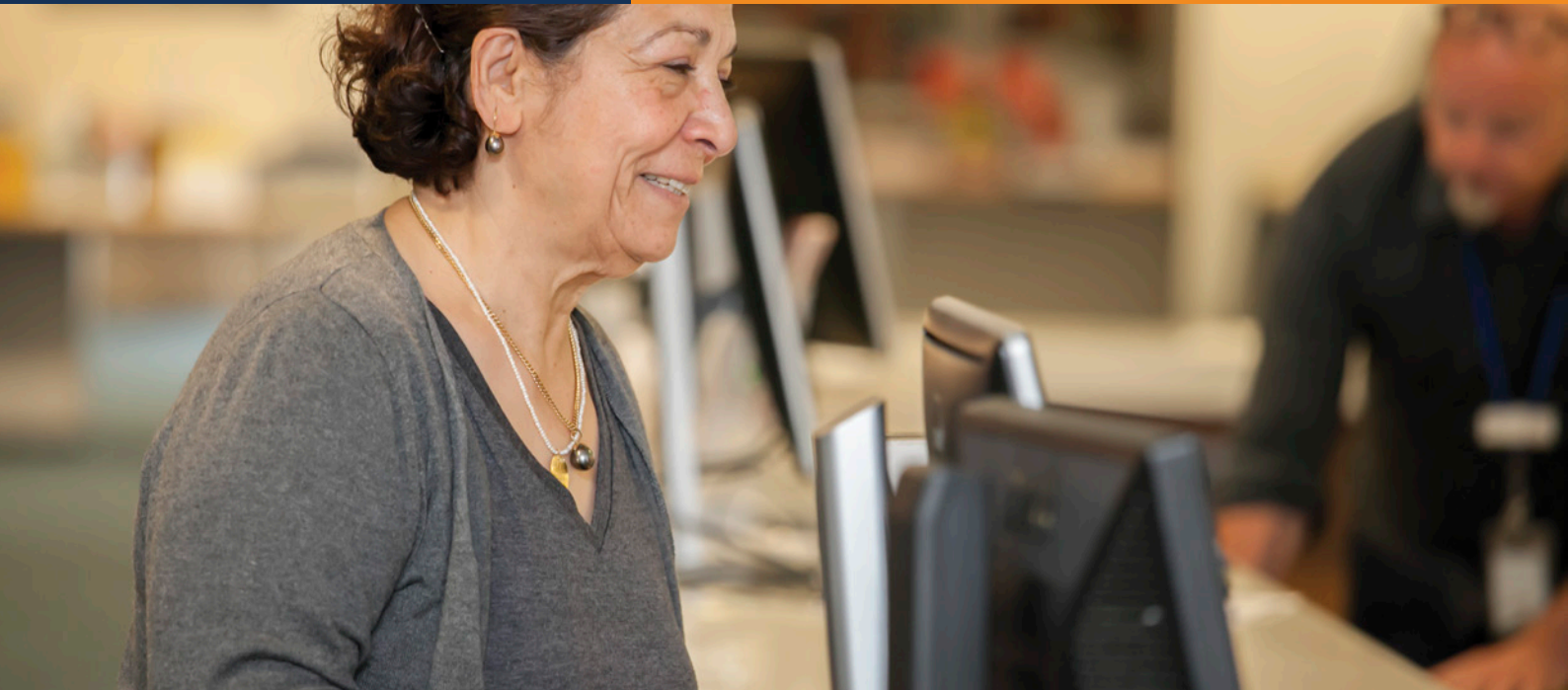


“Any recommendations made are followed up by clear action and participants are informed of outcome even if proposal failed.”

Focus group participant



Photo credit: M.Sulser



Surveys

Surveys are a formal process in which people respond to a set list of questions. Surveys can be physical (on paper or by telephone) or electronic (via an email link or posted on a website).

Cost = Low Time = Low

Advantages

- A useful and quick method of gaining the views of a large cross section of older people
- Can be physical (on paper or by telephone) or can be electronic via an email link or posted on a website)
- Can allow for anonymity
- Useful to include people who are geographically isolated
- Surveys can often be completed at the convenience of the participant
- Answers are usually easily collated and analysed.

Disadvantages

- Difficult to determine the seriousness of responses
- Literacy abilities and clarity of instructions will determine the quality and accuracy of responses
- Older people who are from non-English speaking backgrounds, may not find surveys accessible
- No group interaction or ability to talk or brainstorm ideas with other people.

Suggestions

- Ensure surveys are short
- Ensure clarity of instructions and expectations
- Ensure clarity of purpose
- Provide language support or translate survey
- Ensure adequate options and include opportunities for comments.



South Australian Seniors Card Survey – Office for the Ageing

South Australian Seniors Card members were invited to participate in the Seniors Card member survey from December 2014 to January 2015. More than 5,600 members completed this electronic survey. Survey data provided a benchmark for Seniors Card customer service feedback and provided input into the further development of the digital magazine Weekend Plus. Data has been used to recruit business partners and stakeholders to Seniors Card who have a synergy with older people to enhance the range of benefits and discounts available to Seniors Card members. It has also had a direct influence on the development of a range of policy and projects developed by the Office for the Ageing.

What worked?

- Providing an incentive to participate in the survey through a prize draw that survey respondents were eligible to enter.
- Access to a large number of older people which provided a statistically significant sample population.

What would make it better next time?

- 81% of respondents to the online survey were aged 60-69 years, other engagement tools could be considered to include the views of people 70+.



“Not everyone can make their voice heard and don’t like speaking in public in front of others – find other ways to capture their thoughts and ideas.”

Focus group participant



Peer conversations

Involves older people consulting their peers through interviews, surveys and peer led focus groups.

Cost = High Time = High

Advantages

- Can be useful to engage older people who feel more comfortable engaging with their peers
- Can involve skill development such as communication skills, research, facilitation and interviewing skills
- Builds capacity in the community
- Provides a mechanism to better engage with marginalised groups through the potential to train peers from inside harder to reach communities.

Disadvantages

- Time may be needed to train peer consultants.

Suggestions

- Peer consultants can either be employed for the consultation or reimbursed in other ways (out of pocket expenses etc.).



Active and Healthy Ageing Initiative –Towards an Age-friendly Maroondah 2015–2016, Maroondah City Council Victoria

As part of Maroondah’s age-friendly community consultation process, 36 people in the community were trained to become Age-friendly Champions at a workshop delivered by the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria in conjunction with Maroondah City Council. Community representatives were informed of the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) age-friendly cities and communities framework and were able to make a pledge and commitment to the roll out of Maroondah’s age-friendly program. This enabled the Age-friendly Champions to make a valuable contribution to the consultation process and act as key drivers in the rollout of the Active & Healthy Ageing initiatives.

The Age-friendly Champions were provided resources and a Council Officer as a single point of contact to empower them to help shape the initiatives that would assist in creating age-friendly spaces in the community and bring their ideas back to Council. 123 community groups were invited to share their age-friendly ideas and there was an 84% participation rate. At every stage of the development of the initiative, they were kept informed and updated. The Age-friendly Champions were also involved in reviewing the initiatives so that the priorities presented to Council were endorsed by the community.

What worked?

- People in the community were able to trust and relate to the older adults delivering the age-friendly messaging and its promotion
- Varied opportunities to engage and provide their age-friendly ideas in ways that suited the demographic rather than traditional reliance on hard copy or electronic surveys
- Highly customised engagement activities were conducted with the community groups depending on their preference
- Constant feedback to the age-friendly champions informing them of every stage of the development of the Active & Healthy Ageing Initiative which made them feel even more part of the process
- A single point of contact with Council to build relationship and develop trust and confidence between Council and the community

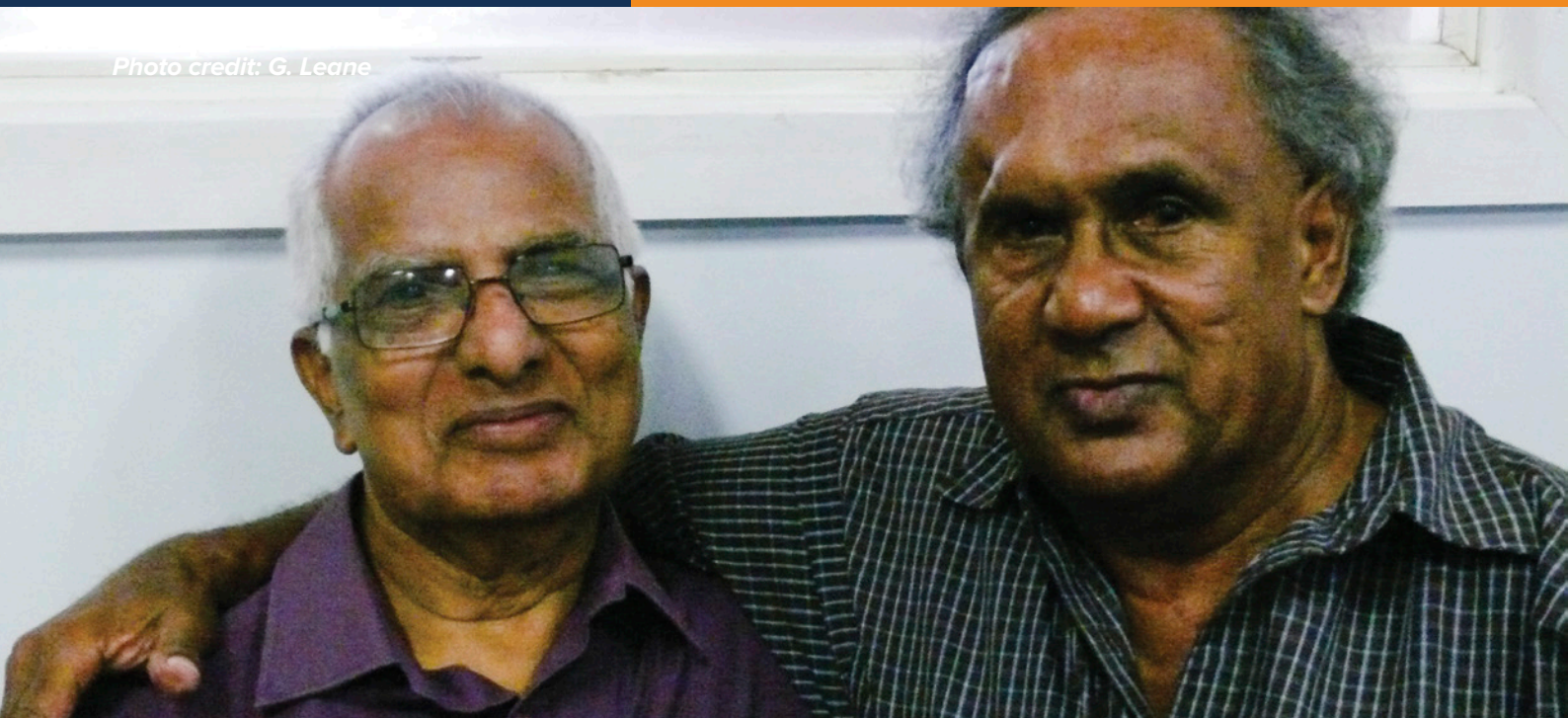
What would make it better next time?

- More training opportunities for further participation
- A rewards/recognition program to acknowledge participation and assistance
- A consultation toolkit and further resources to assist Age Friendly Champions

For further information, please visit:

www.maroondah.vic.gov.au/ActiveHealthyAgeingInit.aspx

Photo credit: G. Leane



Reference Group

A group of older people regularly provide feedback and support to government and provides the views of older people directly into government policies and programs.

Cost = Medium Time = Medium

Advantages

- Enables government to have an easy and ongoing access to a group of older people
- Can be a starting point for other engagement processes for government
- Effectively enables older people to provide direct feedback and input to government policies and programs on a regular basis
- Can provide a forum in which older people can develop skills, experience and confidence.

Disadvantages

- The formal committee approach may exclude some older people
- May not be representative of all older people
- Can limit participation from marginalised and diverse groups or those who may not have been involved with committees previously
- Requires resources to support the group
- Formal meetings require a regular, ongoing commitment by older people to the committee (this may be difficult for participants with other commitments).

Suggestions

- The group may be more effective and older people will feel greater ownership if they assist in establishing the group including the terms of reference and purpose
- Consider a variety of ways for people to participate, other than formal meetings of a reference group – a less formal network can also be effective.



Office for the Ageing Feedback Network

During the consultations to develop *Prosperity Through Longevity: South Australia's Ageing Plan Our Vision 2014-2019* older people said that they wanted opportunities to contribute widely on matters that affect their lives. In response to this, and to information gathered through a Seniors Card Survey, South Australian Seniors Card members were invited to sign up to being contacted for consultation opportunities when and as they arise. The result was the establishment of the Office for the Ageing Feedback Network. Since its inception in 2015, Network members have been invited to participate in a variety of consultations, using a range of methodologies including focus groups, surveys and direct influence in shaping projects.

There are no regular formal reference group meetings and not all of the network group members participate in all consultations. Consultations have included: consumer testing the creative concepts for the Stop Elder Abuse awareness campaign; providing feedback on a new Active Ageing Australia App's features and functions and its perceived value to older people; providing input into the 'Shaping the Future of South Australia: Ageing Well' program and providing knowledge and expertise in educating University of Adelaide Bachelor of Nursing students regarding Elder Abuse through participating in an Elder Abuse simulation learning exercise.

What worked?

- Providing a variety of opportunities to participate through surveys, focus groups and 'hands on' project work.
- Meets the commitment needs of older people because they can choose what they get involved in and when.

What would make it better next time?

- Creating mechanisms to track the number of times people receive invitations to participate to avoid the same people becoming over consulted.
- Supplement with other engagement methods acknowledging the bias of accessing older people's interest electronically.

Source: *Methods of engagement were adapted from the Better Together: A practical guide to effective engagement with young people.*

Acknowledgements: *Office for the Ageing would like to acknowledge City of Salisbury and Maroondah City Council for the examples of engagement with older people scenarios.*

8 Closing the feedback loop

‘What happened to my idea?’, ‘Did you listen?’, ‘Did you care?’, ‘Did it make a difference?’ These are reasonable questions that participants of an engagement will ask.

The feedback loop is one of the most important elements of the engagement process and without it you cannot show real respect for your participants’ contribution. Closing the feedback loop should happen throughout the engagement, not just at the end.

The concept of the feedback loop can be broken down into three elements:



We asked...

Remind people what the engagement is about. Restate the context and remind people why the engagement is being carried out. If you asked specific questions or provided materials, provide these again.



You said...

Provide people with an overview of what has been said so far. In a small group this might be individual feedback. In a large group or broad community engagement, it could be a broad overview of what has been said so far, highlighting the key themes and interesting points. It may be useful to provide graphically displayed statistics so people can see where their input ranked in comparison with others’ priorities.



We did...

Outline what happened with the community and stakeholder input gained through an engagement and explain why it was or wasn’t used. People will appreciate getting this transparent and honest feedback, even if their ideas and opinions were unable to influence the final outcomes.

Closing the feedback loop demonstrates your genuine commitment to the engagement and will give those involved confidence that their contribution was valued. Completing the feedback loop is a great opportunity to officially thank people for their input and participation. Those who successfully complete the feedback loop will have a much better chance of re-engaging the communities and/or stakeholders in the future, and you can keep the community as an activated, interested asset, which can be partnered with again and again.

Stakeholders working with older people in South Australia:

Government

Office for the Ageing

Talk to the Office for the Ageing to find out how they can support your engagement.

p: (08) 8204 2420

e: officefortheageing@sa.gov.au

w: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/officefortheageing

Local Governments

Most local governments have engagement mechanisms. Talk to your local council to find out how they may be able to assist you.

A list of South Australian Councils is available at www.lga.sa.gov.au/councils

Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (AAR)

Is the South Australian Government's lead agency on Aboriginal Affairs whole of government policy matters and supports engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders through the provision of culturally appropriate strategic policy advice to all government departments as required.

Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement

Provides advice to the State Government, as well as promoting Aboriginal inclusion more broadly through the non-Aboriginal community. The Commissioner is the public advocate for engagement between the broader community and Aboriginal people, and investigates and advises

on systemic barriers to Aboriginal people's access and full participation in government, non-government and private services.

w: www.statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/aboriginal-affairs/aboriginal-affairs-and-reconciliation

South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC)

Advise the South Australian Government and public authorities on, and assist them in, all matters relating to multiculturalism and ethnic affairs.

p: 08 7424 7315

e: DCSI.SAMEAC@dcsi.sa.gov.au

w: www.multicultural.sa.gov.au/sameac

Non Government Organisations

There is an extensive range of non-government organisations working with older people. Some of the key stakeholders are listed below.

Catalyst Foundation

(formerly Seniors Information Service) can assist in providing further details regarding organisations working with older people in a variety of settings across diverse communities.

p: (08) 8168 8776

SA country callers
1800 636 368

e: information@catalystfoundation.com.au

COTA SA Peer Educators

COTA SA runs a Peer Educator program that trains older people to talk to other older people about healthy ageing issues.

p: (08) 8232 0422

e: cotasa@cotasa.org.au

w: www.cotasa.org.au

The Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA)

The Multicultural Communities Council of SA is the peak organisation for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in South Australia.

p: (08) 8345 5266

e: mccsa@mccsa.org.au

w: www.mccsa.org.au

References

Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Better Together:
Principles of Engagement, a foundation for engagement in the
South Australian government
www.bettertogether.yoursay.sa.gov.au/

Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Reforming Democracy:
Deciding, Designing and Delivering Together
www.yoursay.sa.gov.au/reforming-democracy

Prosperity Through Longevity: South Australia's Ageing Plan 2014-2019
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/prosperitythroughlongevity

International Association for Public Participation, IAP2
www.iap2.org.au/

Tasmanian Government – Older People, a guide to engagement
[www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/214389/
Engaging_with_older_people.pdf](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/214389/Engaging_with_older_people.pdf)

UK Engaging with older people, evidence review
[www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/
Evidence_Review_Engagement_with_Older_People.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Research/Evidence_Review_Engagement_with_Older_People.pdf?dtrk=true)

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- Catalyst Foundation
- COTA SA

A special thank you to the 2016 Through the Lens: Seniors Card photographic competition finalists whose photos have been included in this resource.
Photo credit included on applicable images.



Where to from here?

Office for the Ageing can provide advice and support to ensure you have what you need to include older people in your engagements and ensure you are using best practice.

p: (08) 8204 2420

e: officefortheageing@sa.gov.au

w: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/officefortheageing

Better Together in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet can provide support and advice on your engagements.

w: www.bettertogether.sa.gov.au

e: bettertogether@sa.gov.au



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