

Purpose	The purpose of this tool is to help you plan your community engagement.
When?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">As part of your community engagement planning and budgeting
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 hour – ½ a day (annually)Best done as a group exercise
Rating	

How to use the Planning tool

The M&E Framework provides the higher-level thinking you need to monitor and evaluate your community engagement activities. However, before you start monitoring or evaluating you will need to be clear on what community engagement activities you are doing and what outcomes you are expecting as a result.



What is community engagement and how should I approach it?

FRDC have produced a helpful guide for seafood industries wanting to engage with communities - [‘License to engage: Gaining and retaining your social license in the seafood industry. A Handbook of available knowledge and tools for effective seafood industry engagement with communities’](#) (the Handbook). A good start with planning your community engagement activities is to read through this FRDC Handbook.

Where possible, doing the planning process as a group exercise will help make sure everyone is on the same page and is clear on the community engagement needs of your organisation. This tool is not a ‘tick-the-box’ exercise; it is a thinking tool to help you and your team reflect and reach a shared understanding of these goals. The tool involves four steps to complete as a group:

1. Identify the target audience you are trying to engage with or reach.
2. Research and plan the most effective ways to reach this target audience.
3. Clarify - what you want the target audience to be doing as a result of your community engagement activities? (What influence do you want to be having?)
4. Consider your budget/resources and how you plan to deliver these activities.

Step 1: Identify your target audience

It is quite unusual for a community engagement activity to be able to effectively reach *all* audiences (across different age-groups, metro and regional audiences, and other demographic groups). You are most likely going to be wasting precious resources if you aim for a broad audience such as ‘the general public’ or ‘people in New South Wales’. It is therefore strongly advised to select a priority community

audience and focus your engagement on this group. Knowing your audience will allow you to develop stories for these groups and publish them on the right platforms. Although it is possible to engage with various audiences simultaneously, be mindful that this requires larger budgets and resources to have any impact across the different audiences.

For this step, we recommend asking the following questions:

- Who is the priority audience we're trying to engage with or reach?
- Demographics
- Are they male or female?
- How old are they?
- Where do they live?
- What do they do for a living?
- What is their level of income and education?
- Do they have children? (and how old are their children?)
- What is their current relationship to the Australian seafood industry?
- Are they supportive or unsupportive of the industry? (are they advocate, fence-sitters, quiet critics, or loud critics?)
- Are they eating Australian seafood?
- Where do they hear information about the Australian seafood industry?

Step 2: Research and plan the most effective ways to reach this target audience

In articulating your target audience, it is then important to understand what the most effective engagement activities and communication methods are for this group. Key questions to ask are:

- Which channels are best to engage with and communicate with this audience: face-to-face activities; social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram); YouTube; industry websites; or more traditional forms of communication such as radio, newsletters, television and magazines?
- What type of stories do they enjoy and care about?
- To what extent are we already engaging with this audience through our engagement channels and activities?
- Do we have data on what activities have been successful in the past in reaching this audience?



What media do my targeted audience consume?

A number of companies develop regular media consumption reports which show how different audiences consume media and how this changes over time. Some of these reports are:

- [Roy Morgan](#)
- [Deloitte media consumption report](#)
- [Yellow social media report](#)

It can be harder to determine the most effective ways to reach the target audience for some demographic groups than others; and therefore might require additional research or assistance from companies with the relevant expertise. For example, public relations (PR) companies, social research consultancies, or marketing companies (digital or traditional marketing). Advice from community engagement experts can also help you determine whether a suite of engagement activities is going to be more effective in reaching your target audience on your priority issue/outcome, versus focusing on just one or two engagement activities.

As a start, have a look across your current suite of community engagement activities to see if any are likely to be effective. Your categories might be:

- Festivals
- School visits
- Seafood sector events
- Hospitality events
- Political events
- Social media (for example, Facebook and Instagram)
- Newsletters
- Other forms of online engagement

You might also want to consider engaging with other similar seafood industries to understand what community engagement activities they have been doing and which have been the most effective for them.

Step 3: Clarify what you want the target audience to be doing as a result of your community engagement activities

As a group, discuss *'what are we hoping to achieve from our community engagement?'* This discussion might surface some key questions about the goals of engagement, which you should explore. Some examples of what you are hoping to achieve as a result of the community engagement are:

- To encourage the priority audience to increase their seafood consumption.
- To improve the priority audience's perceptions regarding Australia's seafood industry (Social Licence to Operate).

- To increase the visibility of specific seafood industry activities to the priority audience.
- To improve relationships and partnerships with the key audience.
- To encourage the target audience to seek employment within the seafood industry.

Similar to selecting a target audience – although it can be tempting to try and achieve many outcomes from your community engagement activity, if you have a small budget and limited resources then we would strongly encourage you to pick one (or two maximum) primary outcomes and focus on these to start with.

Step 4: Prioritise your budget/ resources according to your community engagement goals

Undertaking effective community engagement takes time (and usually budget!) so make sure you allocate the most time and resources to activities that align with your goals of community engagement. It is advised that you avoid or minimise budget for activities that are time-consuming and expensive but do not contribute directly towards your community engagement goals. This may involve making tough decisions about activities which you do regularly but are not meeting your target audience or influencing them in the ways you want. Taking money away from these activities will allow you to invest more resources in other activities that best support your community engagement goals. Investing in the most effective activities will help you get the greatest 'bang for buck' from your community engagement.

Optional: outsourcing

If you are trying to reach an audience beyond your current network or stakeholder group, and if your budget is sufficient then a PR or marketing company could assist in planning and implementing the most effective ways to reach and communicate with this new stakeholder group. This is particularly relevant in the digital space, where unless undertaken in a systematic and strategic way, can lead to your engagement efforts becoming 'digital landfill'.

Seek recommendations from similar businesses on who are 'good' PR and marketing companies to use in your state/region and who understand Australia's agricultural and seafood sector. A few PR and Market research companies to investigate are (please note we have no affiliation with any of these companies. Please continue to add to this list for others to draw from):

- [Haystac](#)
- [Cox Inall](#)
- [Faster Horses](#)
- [Growth for Knowledge](#)

Before you engage with an external PR or Marketing company it's a good idea to have already gone through this planning exercise to be much more targeted in who you are trying to reach, what impact you are aiming to have, and what your budget/resources are. Do your research - phone around and ask the various companies what services they can offer you and ask to see or hear about examples of their work.

Learning and adaptive management

Once you are clear on your community engagement activities it is then important to use the rest of the M&E Framework to measure and evaluate which activities have been the most effective for the different target audiences. It is through this better understanding that you will continue to refine your community engagement activities and have greater reach and impact.