

Campbelltown City Council (SA) - Engaging people with a disability.

Presenter's notes.

Overview of Accessibility Forum.

Of a Council population of 49,000 we have estimated 2,300 identified with 'Assistance needed for a Core Activity'.

Our Council established a disability advisory committee in 2007, and later renamed Accessibility Advisory Committee. Our Community Development Officer supports the committee and actions any recommendations from council which arise from this committee.

The role of the Committee is to provide advice to Council on how we can be more inclusive and accessible. They Committee also helped to develop an accessibility action plan. Part of this plan was to host a forum with people with a disability.

So the date had been set, the tool for engagement had been chosen, a flyer had been developed and then I was asked to help promote and facilitate the forum.

So with less than 3 weeks before the event, I started to develop an engagement strategy and became very worried that we had not planned this event well.

I briefly did some internet research trying to find tips, ideas and suggestions of what to consider when engaging people with a disability. I found a few documents / resources that helped, but what I was really looking for was learning's from other people's experiences, the practical tips and small things to consider.

I was able to have a big impact on the success of the forum, but there were a number of things that I had an issue with. Some I could change, some I couldn't and many things that we simply did not have time to consider.

I learnt a lot from this experience and thought I would share some of them with you.

In regards to **planning**

- It was not done well. Not enough time was provided and I should have been involved from the start and worked more closely with the Accessibility committee.
- The engagement tool was chosen before any planning was done.
- There were no clear objectives set for the forum – how would we know if we achieved anything?
- The fact that our target audience is unique, there was no thought about barriers to participation or special needs on the day to cater for these people.

In regards to **promotion**

- We did not utilise our existing networks and relationships with people and organisations to help promote the event.
- One standard poster/flyer would not suit all of our target audience. We needed to tailor our flyer for each stakeholder or at least send a letter to each stakeholder.
- We included too much text on the flyer

In regards to **room set up**

- It was valuable to do a 'walk though' before the event to identify any access problems. We found many problems that could be quickly fixed.
- Our tables were too low and did not allow wheel chair access.
- Catering was modified to be 'finger food' and easily held and eaten
- The room was too small and made moving very difficult.

In regards to **facilitation**

- A facilitator at each table was imperative. To get to know the people attending, learning about their particular disability before we started, offering them a drink and making them feel welcome.
- Our main presentation went for too long. Could not keep their attention and too much information.
- Lots of images were used in the group presentation.
- The facilitators at the table would have benefited from some 'role playing' to assist us with working with people with a disability.

On the day, we had a total of:

- 6 people with a disability
- 3 representatives from local organisations in the disability field
- 3 Elected Members
- 3 members of the Accessibility Committee attend
- 4 staff helping to facilitate small table discussions

We gathered some important information from the forum around barriers to participation in Council activities, how they access council information and what services and facilities they currently access.

A report was presented to Council and to my surprise they were very pleased with the outcome. As a professional I think we could have done it a lot better and got a much better outcome from the forum.

Small group discussion

Break into small group and discuss our experiences.

Document any tips, learning's, suggestions, ideas to help run other engagement activities for people with a disability.

Notes from Picnic Circle

"If you want to treat me equally, be prepared to treat me differently"

- Consider venue - room layout, refreshments, car parking, toilets with disabled access, table heights, presenting information in different formats, someone to meet and greet.
- Consider visual aids - large font on printed material, use of projector screen
- High contrast colours on printed materials.
- Use large print, images and less words.
- Design a range of tools or multiple ways for feedback.
- Not all disabilities are visible.
- Consider if you need to be more specific with the target group - is "inviting people with a disability" too broad?
- One size does not fit all.
- Lively discussion with small groups can create difficulties for people with hearing aids.
- Plan with your target audience.
- Consider one to one conversations at their home.
- Use a 'Hearing Loop'.
- Be yourself

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What we learnt from our first Accessibility Forum!

Planning

- Involve people with a disability or representative from a local organisation in the planning process (eg City of Campbelltown Accessibility Committee)
- Consider and discuss the different type of disability groups and their specific needs (eg abilities, limitations and requirements - hearing, vision, speech, physical, mental, developmental)
- Consider offering respite care to enable carers to attend?
- Allow a good 'bump in' time for late comers or those who take a bit longer to enter building or arrive late
- Ensure you have budgeted for interpretation services (if required).
- Select and use a range of appropriate engagement tools
- Consider offering 1 – to - 1 'in home' conversations / consultation)
- Encourage RSVP's so you can better understand your audience attending on the day and their specific needs

Promotion

- Target known individuals or groups and use networks and relationships that already exist.
- Consider different promotion material for different groups (promotion to offer community bus to transport people from an organisation or group, provide a taxi voucher for individuals)
- On the poster, make the text large, keep simple and in easy to read language
- Consider using images to highlight interpretation services available
- Mouth-to-mouth promotion seemed to work best – use this
- Invite carers or family member to attend
- Run draft flyer/poster past a person with a disability

Room Set up

- Walk through the venue as if you were in a wheel chair (from carpark to table)
- Ensure tables are high enough to accommodate a wheel chair
- No lollies on table – potential choking hazard
- Drinking water on table in non-spill containers. Provide drinking straws.
- Urn – turned down as not to be potential 'burn hazard'
- Ensure adequate space is provided for people to move about (considering wheelchair access.

Facilitation

- Welcome everyone at the door.
- Consider different 'attention spans' of attendees and keep presentations short and to the point.
- Work in small groups - Consider small groups of 2 or 3 for discussion
- Ask short questions which are easy to understand. Have questions written on paper on the table so you can use them as a visual prop if needed.
- Use images where possible – not a lot of words on the presentation
- Consider some role-playing as part of the briefing so your facilitators are prepared to work with people with differing abilities.
- Evaluation forms did not work, consider getting verbal feedback at the end of the session

Resources which were useful

www.aarts.net.au/uploads/Marketing_to_Disability.pdf

Simple checklist for marketing to people with a disability.

<http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/assets/pdfs/engaging-queenslanders-disability.pdf>

A comprehensive guide that includes a handy list of things to consider when planning and running activities to engage people with a disability.

www.meetingsevents.com.au/downloads/Accessible_Events_Guide.pdf

A general guide to making your event accessible, including check lists and tips. Has a section on "Further contacts" which includes information on other guides and checklists.

http://www.knox.vic.gov.au/Files/Your_Guide_To_Accessible_Events_web.pdf

A practical guide developed by a Local Government Council that includes good tips for sharing information and general communication.