



Australian Government

The Australian Public Service Framework for Engagement and Participation

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Further information about this project

For further information see: <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/aps-framework-for-engagement-and-participation>

For further Open Government publications see: <https://www.industry.gov.au/apsengage>

Foreword

The work of the Australian Public Service (APS) has never been more complex.

The policy, program and service challenges that define our times – like overcoming entrenched disadvantage, the ageing population, Indigenous policy, education, immigration, cities, energy and climate change – are daunting. They require grappling with adaptive and wicked problems. Many will become intractable without difficult trade-offs, and balancing competing interests and values. Often government cannot solve them alone, and roles and responsibilities for action have to be shared with others.

This complexity is compounded by declining trust in government. This is a worry. Trust is a basic indicator of our democracy's health.

For public servants, it is especially concerning. Trust is our 'reform currency'. We rely on it to make and implement tough decisions. Even the most elegant policy or program may fail if people fundamentally don't trust it, or the people rolling it out.

Government has long used engagement and participation to earn trust and overcome complexity.

The APS Framework for Engagement and Participation builds on that tradition. It spells out the principles and standards that underpin effective engagement, and will help consolidate and improve existing practice.

But it also sets a vision, charting a course for engagement to help meet the APS' challenges in the 21st century.

It emphasises that engagements should not focus solely on 'managing' citizens and stakeholders and their expectations, and looking to minimise opposition. Rather, public servants should see the public as a source of expertise, and that engaging with them can forge a partnership to overcome complexity.

Its 'Ways to Engage' divides engagements into four categories: Share, Consult, Deliberate, and Collaborate.

Its message is simple: It asks public servants to reflect on what expertise they require for the problem at hand, and what engagement will best obtain it, in their circumstances.

Public servants will be familiar with 'Share' and 'Consult' engagements. They have been our traditional ways to engage, and will remain important into the future.

'Deliberate' and 'Collaborate' engagements are less familiar, but potentially transformative. They offer a pathway forward for those complex problems that require adaptive thinking; balancing values, interests and priorities; and shared action built on public trust and support.

Both the government and public servants recognise engagement is key to working openly and meaningfully with people, and that this Framework can help achieve this. In December 2019, the Secretaries Board endorsed the Framework as part of the Government's response to the Independent Review of the APS. Endorsement of the Framework included an instruction for the APS to apply the Framework across all departments and agencies as its official engagement.

Applying the Framework and aspiring towards its vision will not always be easy. A range of supporting tools have been developed under the Framework to assist. These include a Guide to the Right Engagement and a series of papers on how to do 'Deliberate' engagements.

At a minimum, we hope the Framework and its supporting tools can change public servants' mindsets towards valuing the expertise outside government; choosing the right way to engage and gather that expertise for the problem at hand; and doing so with a thought to the person that comes after you.

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Objectives of the Framework

The objective of this Framework is threefold:

First It provides guidance and support to the APS, to enhance engagement with community expertise to improve policy, program and services, and deliver better outcomes for citizens

Second It publicly communicates the quality and types of engagements the public can expect from the APS

Third It reaffirms the commitment of the APS to being accountable to the public and transparent in its operation

The Framework seeks to achieve its objectives by establishing guidance materials, which are:

- Principles - underlying truths that guide good engagements
- Ways to Engage - establishing the four key ways that the APS engages with the public
- Standards - guidelines of expected behaviour from a public servant when they are engaging

The Framework outlines practical supporting tools to support its objectives, including:

- A Guide to the Right Engagement
- The Open Dialogue Roadmap



About the Framework



The Framework is intended to be read by every member of the APS – from the most junior member of a team, to the most senior person in a department or agency.



The Framework is based on extensive user research and has been developed and tested through a collaborative and open design process. Its content draws on the generous contributions of nearly 1,000 people from the APS and the public.

In addition, both the Open Government Forum and the APS Reform Committee gave oversight during its development.



The Framework delivers on Commitment 5.2 of Australia's first Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan. The OGP is a multi-lateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to advance open government efforts around transparency, accountability, participation and technological innovation.

The objective of Commitment 5.2 was to establish an APS wide framework to improve public participation and engagement to enhance policy and service delivery outcomes for Australians.

The Framework was endorsed in December 2019 by the Secretaries Board as part of the Government's response to the Independent Review of the APS. Endorsement of the Framework included an instruction for the APS to apply the Framework across all departments and agencies as its official engagement approach.



The Framework outlines practical supporting tools, including:

- A Guide to the Right Engagement - an interactive decision tool that helps public servants choose the right engagement for the problem at hand.
- The Open Dialogue Roadmap - which builds the case for more Deliberate engagements, and sets out a practical method to conduct them in government, called 'Informed Participation'.
- An Engagement Hub (under construction). It will bring together components of the Framework and may later expand to include additional resourcing, capability and networking opportunities.



Glossary

Engagement is a core skill for public servants, and a well-established and sophisticated profession. It has rich traditions and established norms and practices. Like other professions, it has developed some specialised terms.

The Framework defines common engagement terms it uses. Please note that different and very valid definitions of these terms exist. The definitions below were selected because they are most fit for purpose as a common engagement language for the APS. They were designed with and tested with public servants and the people they serve.

Indeed, both public servants and civil society have expressed the need for shared language to drive understanding, because the same terminology can mean different things to different people. This is a way to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Engagement

Processes through which public servants and the public interact. These processes seek to unearth and exchange expertise to design, improve and test policy, programs and services. They may also share information with the public about a policy, program or service.

This is obviously a broad and abstract definition. Engagements can include anything from information shared on a website or social media, to an issues paper process, a roundtable, a town hall meeting, co-design processes, participatory budgeting and a citizen jury.

To make it more meaningful, the Framework's 'Ways to Engage' classifies engagements into four concrete categories: Share, Consult, Deliberate, and Collaborate. See the 'Ways to Engage' section below for further detail.

Expertise

An expansive term, referring to useful knowledge or inputs that the public and civil society holds, that can improve policy, programs and service delivery. To make this more concrete, there are two types of expertise.

The first is expertise in the classic sense of technical skill or knowledge of a subject matter or field, in the way that lawyers have expertise about the law, scientists about science, nurses about nursing, business people about business, and so on.

But it also means less technical knowledge that is also crucial to good policy, programs and services. That is, people are the experts in their own lives, and on questions of basic values and priorities. They have opinions, preferences, user experience and practical know-how: Is a (potentially functional) policy, program or service actually desirable? Does it really support the needs of end users? Will it work on the ground? Does it make sense, should it be trusted?

Public participation

Two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions. It is a form of engagement which assumes active participation. For the purposes of this Framework, public participation is mostly deliberative and collaborative forms of engagement with some elements of consultation.

The public

Everyone other than government and public servants, including civil society, business, media, private citizens, academics and not-for-profits.

More specifically, in the context of engagement, the public refers to anyone who has expertise to share or an interest in the work of government.

Guidance materials

The Framework begins by introducing guidance materials. These are:

1. Principles for Engagement and Participation

Underlying truths that guide good engagements

2. Ways to engage

Establishing the four key ways that the APS engages with the broader community

3. Standards

Guidelines of expected behaviour from a public servant when they are engaging

4. What citizens and stakeholders should be encouraged to do

A message for APS stakeholders and the public



The guidance materials are intended to apply to all APS engagements. It is expected that public servants will apply them in their work, discuss them in meetings, and share them.

They also show the public what is expected of public servants in the course of their engagement.

Engagements can be complex, and research suggests that the APS' awareness and practical experience of how to engage the community beyond traditional forms of engagement is patchy. That is why the guidance materials are designed to be comprehensive.

1. Principles for engagement and participation

This component of the Framework sets out a vision to guide the way the APS engages with the public. The principles aim to shift the APS from a culture of 'managing stakeholders' towards engagement of public expertise to deliver better policy, programs and services.

Too often, APS engagement emphasises managing stakeholders, rather than engaging to uncover useful expertise. That is, public servants often think of engagement as a way to get buy-in and minimise opposition.

While sometimes the circumstances suit this approach, other times it has serious consequences. At a minimum, it makes it harder to find the best solution. With some complex issues, crucial expertise gets overlooked; and it can foster entrenched views, limit opportunities for people with different views to influence, and reduces commitment to the end outcome, ultimately making it harder to gain and maintain buy-in.

In broad terms, people are very supportive of what they design, and less so when their opinion is polled.

Of course, public servants work in an environment with many legitimate constraints and pressures on their time and resources. Following these principles will not always be easy or practical. Time and resource constraints, in particular, make it difficult.

Aspiring to the principles will help ensure engagements go beyond seeking

buy-in, and instead tap the public's expertise and lead to better policy, programs and services.

Listen



- We understand that there is expertise in the public that can help design and deliver outcomes and we are committed to listening more than telling
- We will engage the right people as early in our processes as we can
- We will try to remember what has gone before and not keep asking the same questions – relevant data from engagements will be appropriately shared and re-used
- In the act of listening, we will strive to ensure diversity will be represented, and the voices of hard-to-reach or marginalised people will be sought

What listening looks like:

- We will think about who the right people to engage are, and the best way to hear what they have to say
- We will think about when the right time to engage is, for them and for us
- When seeking opportunities to listen we will be mindful of the conversations that have previously occurred

Be genuine

- We will be clear on our objectives and choose ways to engage that are fit for purpose
- We will value people's time
- We will be accessible, creating the time and space for people to engage, and when we can we will engage in real time
- We will articulate the value we see in working together
- When we engage people we will provide feedback that closes the loop

What being genuine looks like:

- We will have considered the nature of the challenge or opportunity and choose the right way to engage to meet the objectives
- We will not engage if there isn't anything to discuss
- We will clearly explain the value in engaging, for them and for us
- We will think about how to let people know how their feedback was used



Be open



- We will be clear about what we are trying to achieve, the scope of our challenge and the potential for people to influence outcomes
- We will use simple language
- We will be open about our limitations and constraints
- We will tell people what we are doing, the context in which it is occurring, and where their input and information is going
- We will ensure that we use a range of modes to communicate with the public (e.g., face to face, phone, internet, etc.)

What being open looks like:

- We will convey to the people we are engaging with what can be influenced, what has changed and what is fixed
- We will provide sufficient information in a way that helps people know how best to make meaningful contributions
- We will use appropriate channels to engage people, so we can target a diverse range of people with different expertise

2. Ways to engage

This component of the Framework defines four ways the APS engages with the public. It serves to create a shared understanding and common language for engagement.

The four ways to engage are:

- **Share**
When government needs to tell the public about a government initiative
- **Consult**
When government needs to gather feedback from the public about a problem or a solution
- **Deliberate**
When government needs help from the public because a problem involves competing values, and requires trade-offs and compromise
- **Collaborate**
When government needs help from the public to find and implement a solution

The way public servants should engage the public will depend on a consideration of the following issues:

- the complexity of the problem, whether the problem has already been framed, if there is a shared understanding of the problem
- what is in scope for influence, and what has already been decided
- who will be involved in delivering the solution

The research undertaken in the design of the Framework shows there is value in creating a shared understanding and language about how the APS engages.

To do this, the Framework defines the ways public servants can engage. There are existing definitions and approaches to public participation that offer inspiration in this respect, particularly the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)'s work. But user research suggests the

definitions adopted by the Ontario Provincial Government are well suited to the APS, and they resonated with people inside and outside the APS. The Ontario Provincial Government's engagement definitions have been used as the building blocks for the 'Ways to Engage' within this Framework. This foundation has been built upon and adapted to reflect the APS context and the user research.

Don't Panic!

The Framework is not intended to imply that one way of engaging is, in and of itself, better than another. For example, it is not necessarily 'better' to collaborate than to share information.

The relative merit of the different ways depends on the circumstances. When planning an engagement, public servants should ask themselves: Which of these ways will best engage the expertise I need to solve the particular problem at hand, given the constraints I am under?

Share

Does government need to tell the public about a government initiative?

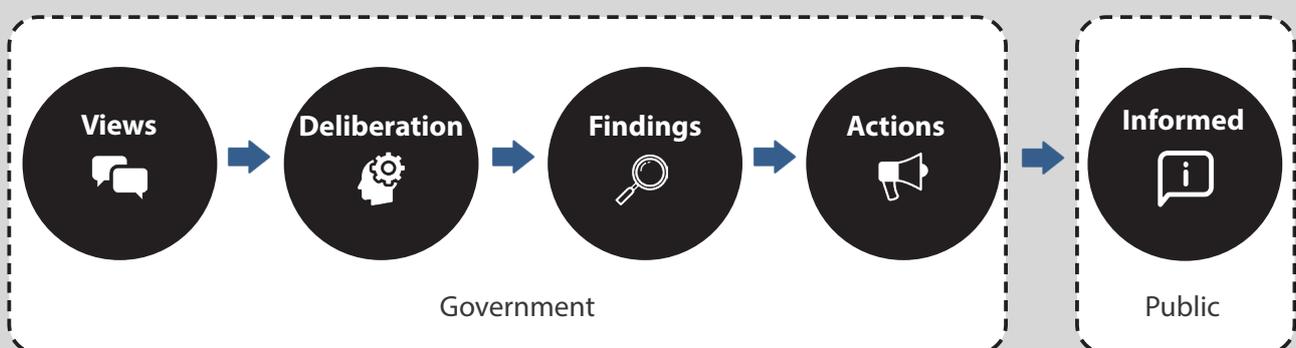
Sharing information is where communication is one-way, from the government to the public. People receive factual information to describe an event, new initiative or changes to an existing process.

Typically, sharing information is a good approach in the following circumstances:

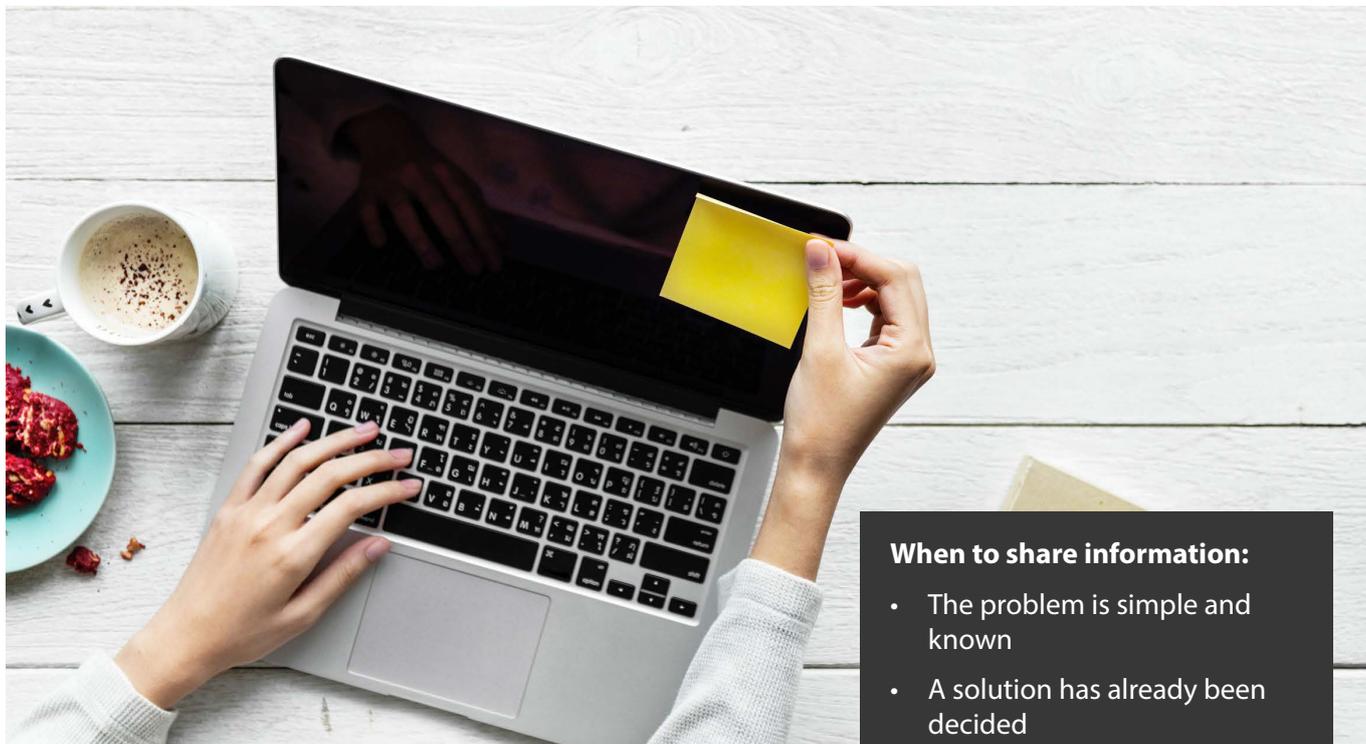
- A decision has already been made
- The intention is to share information after the fact to inform the public about changes or new initiatives
- The information to share is concise, user-friendly and comprehensive
- It is clear to the receiver of the information that the intention is to merely share information

The promise to the public when sharing information is simple: 'We will keep you informed'.

'Share' engagement visualisation



Typically, Government gathers up and develops Views internally; a team will Deliberate on them to assess the views on their merits; they synthesise this into Findings; and then Actions are agreed. This is shared with the Public.



- When to share information:**
- The problem is simple and known
 - A solution has already been decided
 - The solution will be implemented by the government

Examples



Information sharing is the most familiar and common way of engaging:

Government agencies routinely use websites to share information about their work;

They also use social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn), and more traditional mediums like television, newspapers, poster advertising and radio; and

Some information sharing is face to face, e.g. a Town Hall meeting.



Innovative examples of information sharing include digital solutions, like:

IP Australia's 'IP NOVA' - a free cloud-based data visualisation tool that enables anyone to explore the intellectual property landscape based on IP Australia's open government data.

See: <https://ipnova.ipaustralia.gov.au/#/>

The Australian Tax Office 'Alex', a virtual assistant, which uses natural language processing to help with general tax inquiries.

Go to <https://beta.ato.gov.au/Tests/Introducing-Alex--our-new-web-assistant>



But innovative information sharing can also be 'low-tech':

South Australia's Open State Festivals: 10-11 day festivals of events, exploring how collaboration, innovation, ideas and enterprise can address the complex challenges of the future. The 2016 event attracted 25,000 attendances at 60 events. The 2017 event was attended by 17,500 people, with 171 events across six themes: Future Food, Future Human, Future Enterprise, Future Planet, Future Cities and Future Democracy with over 165 events.

For more information, do an internet search for "Open state South Australia".

Consult

Does government need to gather feedback from the public about a problem or a proposed solution?

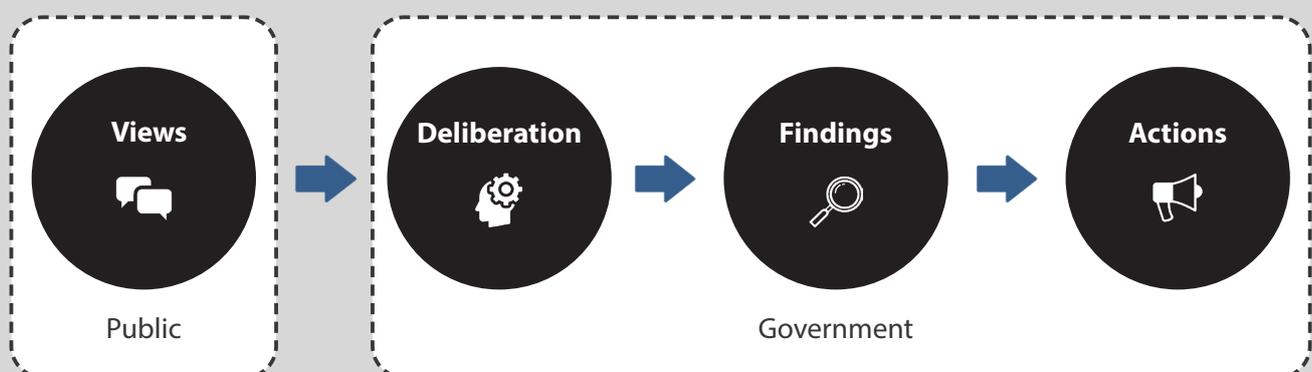
In consultation, government starts by posing a question or topic for the participants (usually citizens and/or stakeholders) to consider, then asks them to provide their views on it. The process to gather views can take different forms, such as a town hall meeting, a design thinking workshop, a submission, or an online survey. Ideally, when provided with this opportunity to comment, participants' views and lived experiences should be supported with quantitative data or analysis.

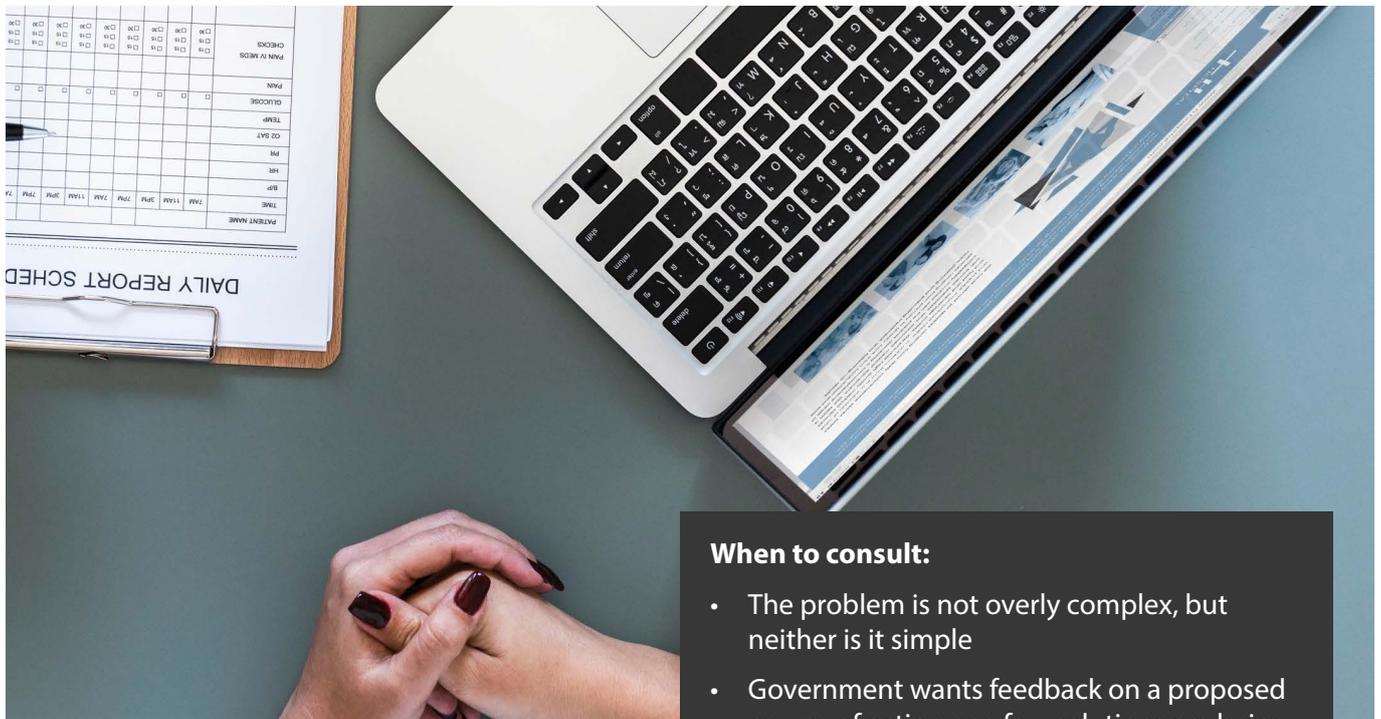
Typically when an engagement is a consultation the following characteristics are present:

- Participants are provided with an opportunity to present their views to decision-makers, and provide evidence and arguments in support or in opposition of them
- Decision-makers should assess these positions on their merits, but they are not obliged to accept or act on them
- Decision-makers should provide the rationale for their final decisions

The promise to the public here is: 'We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.'

'Consult' engagement visualisation





When to consult:

- The problem is not overly complex, but neither is it simple
- Government wants feedback on a proposed course of action or a few solutions are being considered and the public's views will be considered in deciding which solution to implement
- Ultimately, government will weigh up the pros and cons of each solution, and take responsibility for implementing the solution

Examples



Supported school transport is provided to some children and young people with disability so that they can travel to and from school. Currently, supported school transport is delivered by state and territory governments with arrangements differing in each jurisdiction.

As the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is rolled out across Australia, a discussion paper was released requesting feedback from the public on whether current arrangements for supported school transport should continue or whether the potential model for supported school transport could work under the NDIS.

For further examples of consultations, see also: <https://engage.dss.gov.au/>



The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources Consultation Hub lists the department's current and closed consultations. The public is able to find relevant consultations, relevant documents related to them, and provide submissions.

As an example, one consultation was the 'International Space Investment Initiative'. For this consultation, the Australian Space Agency sought views on the design of the initiative, in particular from businesses and researchers that are currently engaged, or would like to be engaged, in international space projects.

It can be viewed here: <https://consult.industry.gov.au/space/international-space-investment-initiative-design/>

Deliberate

Does government need help from the public to balance competing values and interests and achieve trade-offs and compromise?

In a 'Deliberate' engagement people are asked to help identify and frame an issue.

and/or develop a strategy that the government commits to deliver. Participants discuss to find common ground and collectively arrive at an agreement. Participants need to be able to support their lived experiences with evidence and facts. Government must be willing to trust the process to deliver recommendations it could work with.

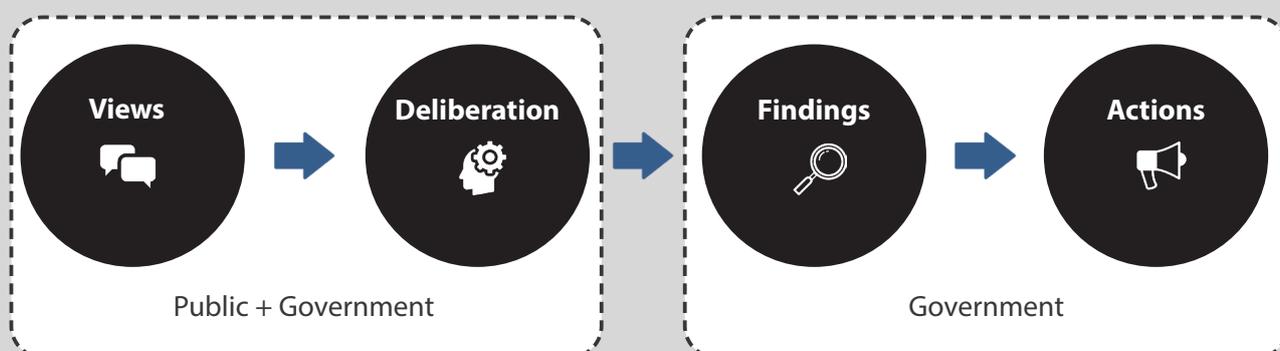
Typically, when an engagement is a deliberation the following characteristics are present:

- Deliberative engagements take a rule-based approach. Participants are provided with an engagement plan which sets boundaries for how far and in what way citizens and/or stakeholders will participate in decision-making
- The process begins by giving participants an opportunity to present their views to decision-makers, provide evidence and arguments in support of them, and reply to opposing views
- Once views have been presented, participants engage in deliberative discussions about the best way to frame the problem, identify issues and develop solutions, subject to the boundaries and rules set by the plan
- In the discussions, participants are expected to listen to each other, learn about each other's concerns, discuss similarities and differences, weigh evidence, and work together to find win/win solutions that strike a better balance between competing values and interests
- They develop recommendations, that are provided to government for a final decision

The promise to the public can take the form of: 'We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions. Subject to the boundaries and rules set by the engagement plan, we will incorporate your advice and recommendations into final decisions to the maximum extent possible.'

For more information on 'Deliberate' engagement please refer to the Open Dialogue Roadmap developed by the Open Government Partnership Practice Group on Open Dialogue and Deliberation, located at <https://www.industry.gov.au/apsengage>, and discussed on page 24.

'Deliberate' engagement visualisation





When to deliberate:

- The problem is complicated or complex
- For help in framing what the problem is and what the issues are, or if there is a need to establish a shared understanding
- When a consultative process where government deliberates on the issues alone will create winners or losers
- Government and the public work together to frame the problem and identify any issues and develop solutions, but government is responsible for implementation and delivery

Examples



A citizens' jury is a group of randomly selected people that are representative of the broader community, who are briefed by experts to help resolve an issue. They have been used for a range of issues - including healthcare provision, public service funding, insurance policy, the environment and even constitutional change. The South Australian Government has used them to consider road safety, and cat and dog management. Further information is here: <https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/decisions/citizens-jury-dog-and-cat-management/about>.

Please note that citizen juries are a deliberative engagement type only when the jury makes a recommendation, and it is up to the government to decide whether it will implement the recommendation or not. When the jury's decision is final, the government is merely a facilitator of the process.

For further examples of citizen juries and other deliberative engagements see: <https://democracyrd.org>



The Australian Government is aiming to build a single storage facility to permanently dispose of low-level and temporarily store Australia's intermediate-level radioactive waste. The recent amendments to the National Radioactive Waste Management Act (2012) formalises the importance of broad community support before a site could be selected.

The facility will not be built in a location if the nearby community does not want it. The community has been provided with information from experts, and given time and space to deliberate prior to voting on the matter.

See: <https://www.industry.gov.au/news/national-radioactive-waste-management-facility-have-your-say>

Collaborate

Does government need help from the public to find and implement a solution?

A 'Collaborate' engagement is a very specific way to engage - not simply a vague or general approach that might involve some stakeholders. It involves a commitment between governments, citizens, and/or organisations to pool their resources and align their efforts to achieve a shared goal that no one person or organisation has the resources to solve alone – not even government.

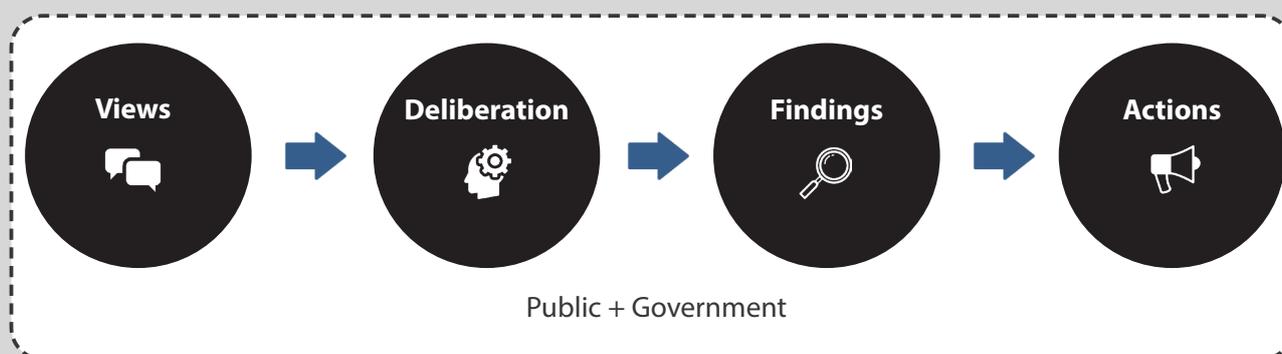
In these engagements, people work with the government to define an issue, develop and deliver proposed solutions. Participants share decision-making and implementation of solutions. Again, participants need to be able to support their lived experiences with evidence and facts. Government must be willing to trust the process to deliver recommendations it could work with.

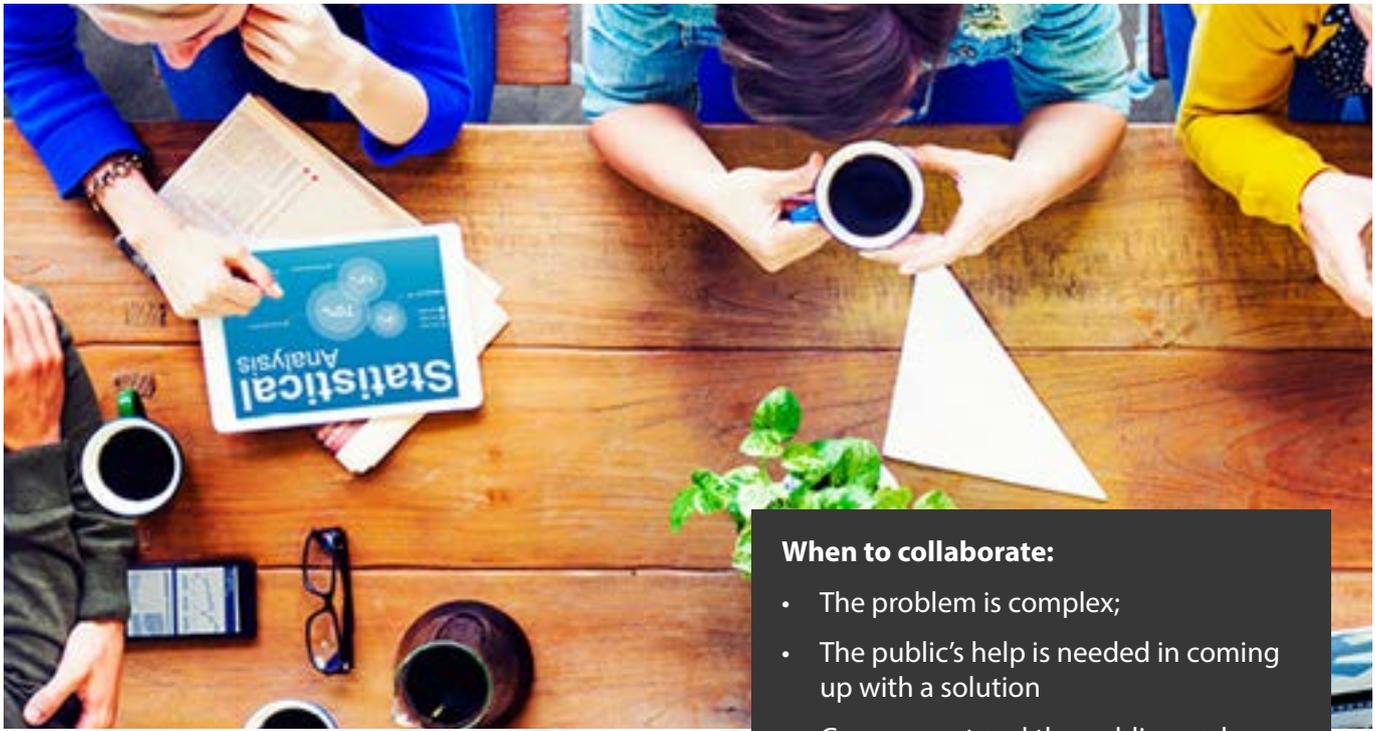
Typically, when an engagement is a collaboration the following characteristics are present:

- Like a Deliberate engagement, collaborative engagements also take a rules-based approach. Participants are given an engagement plan that sets boundaries for how far and in what way citizens and/or stakeholders will participate in decision-making;
- The process begins by giving participants an opportunity to present their views to decision-makers, provide evidence and arguments in support of them, and reply to opposing views;
- Once views have been presented, participants engage in constructive discussions about the best way to solve the problem, subject to the boundaries and rules set by the plan;
- The participants should assess different options on their merits and adjust their views accordingly;
- There needs to be an agreement on government's role versus the community's role in implementing and delivering any recommended solutions. This could take the form of an agreed action plan; and
- The final decision on how to proceed remains with government.

The promise to the public can take the form of: 'We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions. Subject to the boundaries and rules set by the engagement plan, we will incorporate your advice and recommendations into final decisions to the maximum extent possible. We will need your help to implement the solutions together'.

'Collaborate' engagement visualisation





When to collaborate:

- The problem is complex;
- The public's help is needed in coming up with a solution
- Government and the public need to pool resources and align effort because no one person or organisation can solve the problem alone

Examples



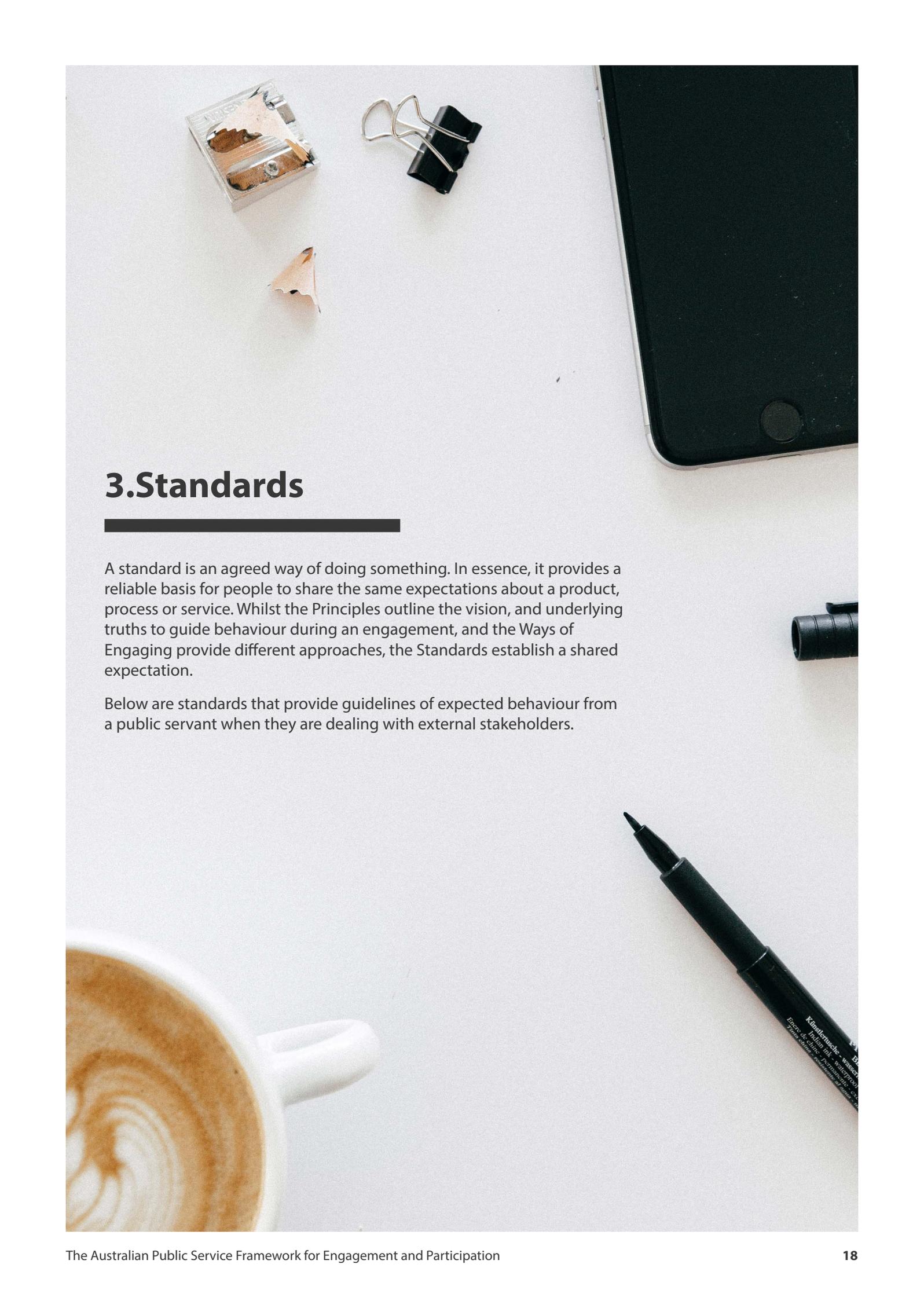
'Empowered Communities' involves Indigenous leaders from eight regions across Australia working together with government and corporate Australia to reform how Indigenous policies and programs are designed and delivered.

More information is available here:
<https://empoweredcommunities.org.au>



The Co-design Community Engagement project involved the Commonwealth Department of Human Services (DHS) joining with other levels of government, citizens and NGOs in a collaborative planning process to deliver better services to the community. The project involved a series of community dialogues in nine sites across Victoria. In each dialogue, up to 30 participants met at least four times to identify and discuss ways to improve services for selected groups. All regions then produced action plans with clearly stated responsibilities to improve services for government and community service participants.

APS participants, and the majority of non-APS participants, reported that the project had been highly successful. The project led to further adoption of co-design and collaboration at DHS. More information is here: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/about-us/corporate-publications-and-resources/co-design-community-engagement-prototype-outcomes-report>

A top-down photograph of a white desk. In the upper left, there is a silver pencil sharpener with a pencil and shavings. To its right is a black paperclip. Further right is the corner of a black smartphone. In the lower right, a black pen lies diagonally. In the bottom left corner, a white coffee cup with latte art is partially visible.

3. Standards

A standard is an agreed way of doing something. In essence, it provides a reliable basis for people to share the same expectations about a product, process or service. Whilst the Principles outline the vision, and underlying truths to guide behaviour during an engagement, and the Ways of Engaging provide different approaches, the Standards establish a shared expectation.

Below are standards that provide guidelines of expected behaviour from a public servant when they are dealing with external stakeholders.

The Australian Public Service is expected to:



1. Define the objective

Clearly define the engagement's objectives, which may include understanding the problem and what expertise should be tapped



2. Choose the right approach

Make sure the way of engaging matches the problem at hand



3. Manage expectations

Be honest about what is on the table. That is, what is yet to be decided and what has already been decided



4. Choose the right people for the job

Ensure participants with suitable expertise, skills and knowledge are being engaged for the problem



5. Be transparent

Explain the objectives and process to participants at the outset



6. Provide sufficient information

Ensure information that is essential to participants' roles is made available to them



7. Provide opportunities to be heard

Be inclusive and ensure diverse voices are heard - not just the loudest, eg: use plain English, offer multiple feedback channels, proactively seek appropriate participants and remove barriers to participation



8. Understand all views

Ensure the views presented are fairly considered at the decision making stage



9. Close the loop

Explain how participants' contributions were taken into account in a timely manner



10. Continuous improvement based on feedback

Ensure that there is a feedback mechanism to capture lessons learnt

4. What citizens and stakeholders should be encouraged to do

A message for public servants: Encourage citizens and stakeholders to get involved in engagements

Engagements beyond information sharing will require citizens and stakeholders to seize opportunities for public participation, and do so constructively and proactively. Both the public service and the public need to engage for an engagement to succeed.

For public servants, it may not always be easy to encourage the public to engage constructively, even if the engagement is best practice. Many public servants would not be surprised to learn that user research shows that the public is often sceptical about government engagement. They often doubt its quality, and wonder if it is genuine. They've had engagement experiences that have left them frustrated and more adversarial.

However, more optimistically, the user research also shows that stakeholders and the public are pragmatic and realistic. They understand that

public servants face legitimate constraints on their engagements, and can't always do best practice. They are also interested in more advanced collaborative and deliberative engagements, and are hopeful of building ongoing relationships with the APS.

To encourage the public, the most crucial elements of the guidance materials to apply are those that will build trust in the process. It will make a big difference to apply the standards to ensure the basics of engagement are in place (particularly being transparent, managing expectations and closing the loop); and using the ways to engage to apply the right engagement tool for the job.



A message for APS stakeholders and citizens: Continue to engage the APS with an open mind



Public servants won't be able to improve engagement alone. For engagement to improve policy, programs and service delivery in Australia, public servants need the public to continue to work constructively with them.

For citizens who might be sceptical about government engagement, this Framework is evidence of a serious commitment to improve engagement, and evidence that the public should persevere in their engagements with government. Public servants have significant and legitimate constraints in their work that can make engagement challenging. But most are practical, and are happy to go an extra mile in an engagement if it will really help them in their work. In fact, many will be very determined to try to make an engagement succeed.

Moreover, the guidance materials held in the Framework are useful tools for the public in their engagements with government. While they are tailored to public servants, their users, and their operating environment, they could be applied in any scenario where lots of different people need to build a dialogue about complex issues.

The Framework asks the public to continue to engage with an open mind. As previously noted, trust is central to successful engagement. The Framework argues that if government and public servants want more trust from citizens, they will have to trust them more. This commitment has created a real opportunity that the public should seize. The more that engagement is approached with a constructive mindset, the more benefits flow from it.



Engagement tools

Applying the Framework and aspiring towards its vision will not always be easy.

A range of supporting tools have been developed under the Framework to assist. These include:

- **A Guide to the Right Engagement**
The Guide is an interactive decision tool that helps public servants choose the right engagement for the problem at hand
- **The Open Dialogue Roadmap**
The Roadmap builds the case for more Deliberate engagements, and sets out a practical method to conduct them in government, called 'Informed Participation'
- **The APS Engagement Hub (under construction)**
The Hub will bring together components of the Framework and may later expand to include additional resourcing, capability and networking opportunities



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Innovation and Science

A Guide To The Right Engagement



A Guide to the Right Engagement

A Guide to the Right Engagement is an interactive decision tool that helps public servants choose the right engagement for the problem at hand.

It is available at <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/aps-guide-to-the-right-engagement>

It is made up of two components: the Diagnostic and the Catalogue.

Through a series of questions, the Diagnostic prompts users to think about the complexity of the problem, and the time and resources available. Based on this information, it recommends the most suitable engagement approach.

The Catalogue then directs users to a number of potential engagement processes that complement the recommended engagement approach. For example, if the Diagnostic recommends undertaking deliberation, the Catalogue then helps users consider whether they should do this through a workshop or citizens' panel.

The Guide builds on the Framework by raising awareness of different ways of engaging, as well as providing guidance on conducting engagements. It also responds to research findings that suggest awareness and practice of more meaningful engagements is patchy across the APS.

The Open Dialogue Roadmap

The Framework identifies 'Deliberate' as one of its four Ways of Engaging.

The Open Dialogue Roadmap builds on this. It is a series of four volumes on Deliberate engagements.

It makes the case for more Deliberate engagements, and sets out a practical method to conduct them in government, called 'Informed Participation'.

Informed Participation has been designed specifically for governments, public servants, public sector organisations and their specific contexts and needs.

The Roadmap was developed through the Open Government Partnership Practice Group on Open Dialogue and Deliberation. The Practice Group includes public servants and members of civil society from five countries. Australia is a co-chair of the Practice Group, and took a leading role in the development of the four volumes and the Informed Participation approach.

The Roadmap is also a key initiative of the 'Enhance public engagement skills in the Public Sector' commitment of Australia's second Open Government National Action Plan.

The volumes are available here: <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/open-dialogue-roadmap>.

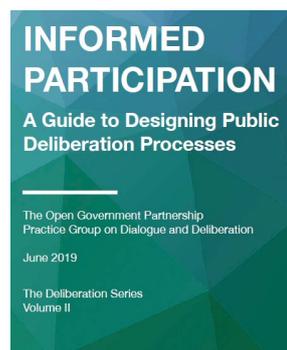
An overview of each volume is below:



Volume I Deliberation — Getting Policy-Making Out From Behind Closed Doors

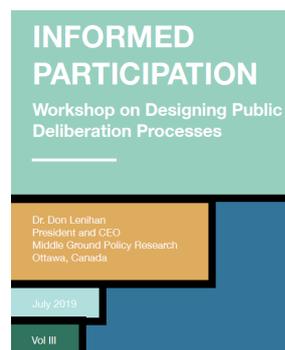
This volume provides a rigorous argument for why public deliberation can improve government decision making, and how it can be made to work for governments and citizens.

To that end, it provides accessible, concise and cogent answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about public deliberation.



Volume II Informed Participation — A Guide to Designing Public Deliberation Processes

This volume builds on Volume I, laying out 'Informed Participation' — a step-by-step methodology for designing public deliberation processes.



Volume III Informed Participation — A Workshop on Designing Deliberative Processes

This volume provides a toolkit to train practitioners in the Informed Participation deliberative methodology.



Volume IV The Role of Narrative Building in Public Deliberation

This volume explains how to build a shared narrative and how this can help government to reframe and solve difficult policy issues by bringing stories into the policy process.



The APS Engagement Hub (under construction)

The APS Engagement Hub is a key initiative of the 'Enhance public engagement skills in the Public Sector' commitment of Australia's second Open Government National Action Plan.

In the first instance, the Engagement Hub will be a digital space. It will take the form of an interactive website. It will tie together elements of the Framework and create a landing point for guidance, advice and support.

The Hub will bring together components of the Framework and may later expand to include additional resourcing, capability and networking opportunities.

It will be iterated over time, and has the potential to integrate engagement efforts across the APS.

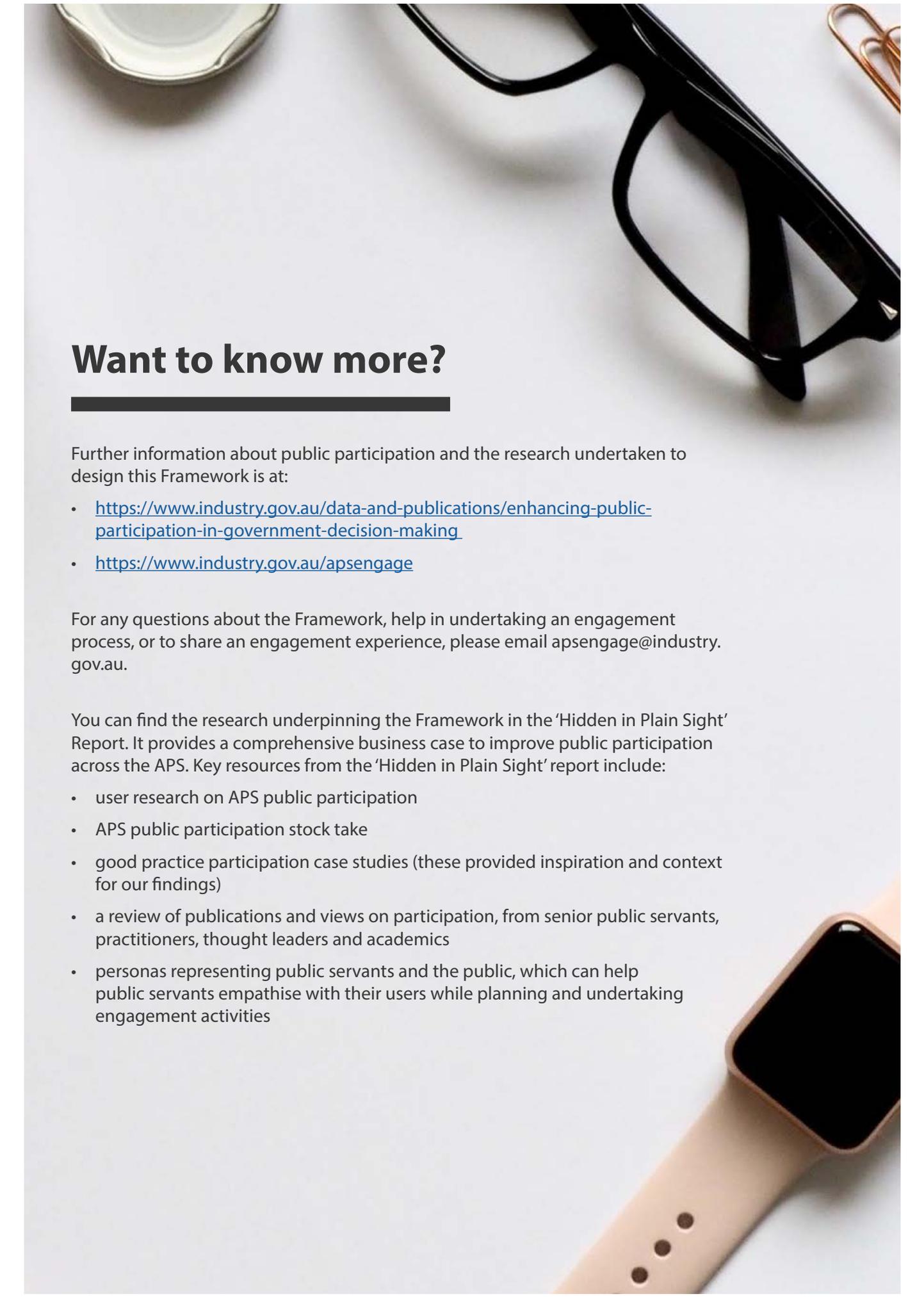
Work is progressing on the development of an APS Engagement Hub. In December 2019, a form of a minimum viable product (MVP) hub was established, called: APS Engage: Public engagement and participation support. As envisaged in the Commitment, it includes the beginnings of a digital space, at [industry.gov.au](https://www.industry.gov.au). The digital space houses the APS Framework for Engagement and Participation; ties together elements of the Framework (including *A Guide to the Right Engagement*, *The Open Dialogue Roadmap* developed as part of this Commitment; and the user research underpinning the work for context and transparency), and is a landing point for guidance, advice and support. The MVP hub is located at:

<https://www.industry.gov.au/apsengage>

Over time the Hub could act as a platform for general interaction between the public and the APS. A deliberative engagement approach will be taken to design this aspect of the Hub.

The Hub will provide the infrastructure needed to ensure the initiatives under the Framework are delivered and that the Framework is more than words on a page. It will drive real improvements in the way expertise outside of the APS is engaged to deliver better outcomes for citizens.





Want to know more?

Further information about public participation and the research undertaken to design this Framework is at:

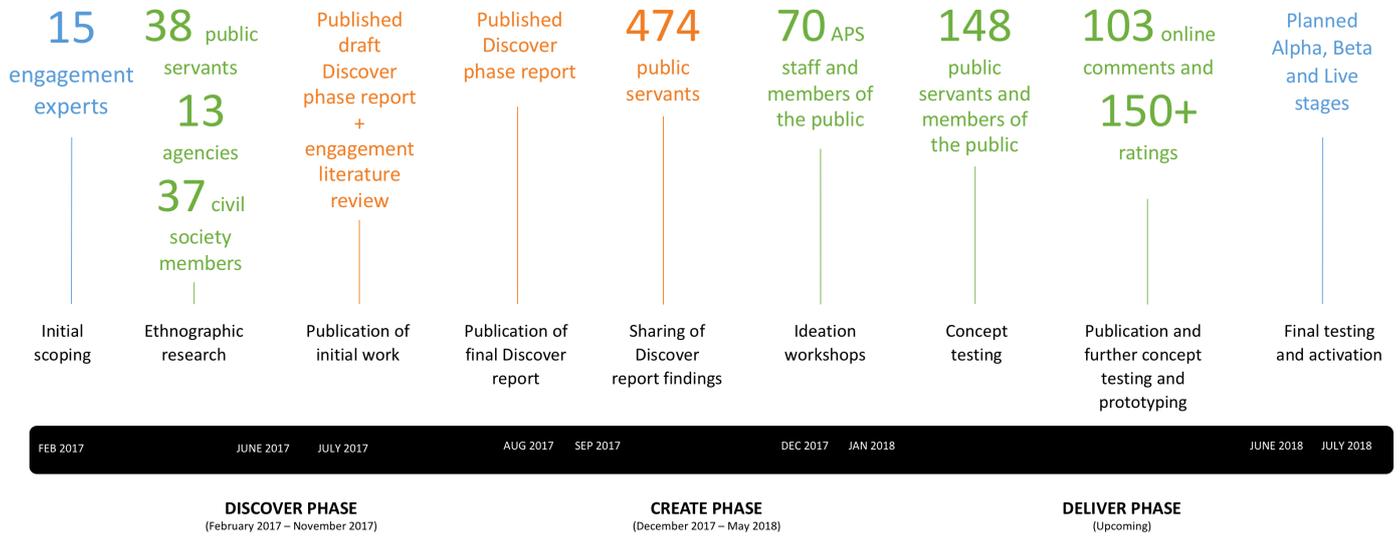
- <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/enhancing-public-participation-in-government-decision-making>
- <https://www.industry.gov.au/apsengage>

For any questions about the Framework, help in undertaking an engagement process, or to share an engagement experience, please email apsengage@industry.gov.au.

You can find the research underpinning the Framework in the 'Hidden in Plain Sight' Report. It provides a comprehensive business case to improve public participation across the APS. Key resources from the 'Hidden in Plain Sight' report include:

- user research on APS public participation
- APS public participation stock take
- good practice participation case studies (these provided inspiration and context for our findings)
- a review of publications and views on participation, from senior public servants, practitioners, thought leaders and academics
- personas representing public servants and the public, which can help public servants empathise with their users while planning and undertaking engagement activities

Appendix: Statistics on engagements that helped design the Framework



Legend – Engagement types by colour

Information sharing activities

Consultations

Collaborations

