



Community Conversations

6. Phase 2 – Discovering

Consulting widely with community members will ensure your co-design team has a deep understanding of the topic/challenge being addressed. By gathering information and having conversations with people from all stakeholder groups, you will better understand the challenges and needs of the community; some of which will challenge team member's assumptions.

It's important when planning opportunities for consultation that the team focuses on capturing a diversity of voices with differing experiences. This is also a great way to raise awareness about the project throughout your community.

Who will be consulted?

Work with your co-design team to determine who needs to be consulted across the community and how many people you'd like to talk to (prioritise quality and diversity over quantity).

Consider:

- Voices missing from the group
- Age demographics
- Location/town of residents
- Experts on this topic vs people with very little knowledge
- People from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities
- Different sectors/groups/organisations

How will you consult?

Explore the different ways to capture the information you need from your community. Having a handful of different ways for people to contribute will widen the range of people who respond and reduce barriers to getting involved.

Consider:

- One-on-one interviews (in person, online and phone calls)
- Surveys (online and handouts)
- Group discussions/focus groups
- Drop-ins and chats
- Online group sessions

Example:

Safeguarding Volunteering Project

This project focused on conversations with:

- Volunteer groups: Small, medium and large (statewide).
- Different sectors: Sports, emergency services, health, community and education, etc.
- Informal volunteers who weren't part of a specific group.
- People who don't volunteer or who no longer volunteer.



Make sure all member of the co-design team take part so the work is shared and each of them is contributing to the conversations and hearing from community members. Each team member should take part in a mix of conversations with people in their networks as well as in broader community engagement activities. This will help team members to develop a deeper understanding of the topic and their community as well as challenge their assumptions and increase their ownership of the project.

What will you ask?

Getting the questions right is important. After all, you want to end up with information that provides insights and clarity that will drive the project towards a worthwhile and effective outcome. Make sure co-design team members spend time discussing what they need to know to support building solutions to address the project challenge/topic.

Tips for conversations

Questions are just a starting point. You will need to dig into the answers and experiences of the people you talk with to find the deeper understanding you're after. The following prompts can be useful to build a better understanding during conversations:

"Tell me more about..."

"Can you show me...?"

"What do you mean by...?"

"Can you give me an example...?"

Collect quotes because these words will be powerful story-telling tools later in the project when you start sharing outcomes with stakeholders.

Take good notes during conversations so you don't need to interpret later. If you have to guess at what was said later on, you run the risk of adding your personal bias and letting your own experiences colour the experience.

Capture the data needed to report on how widely you consulted and who you spoke with (this could be the number of people, where you spoke with them, and details about their age, gender and occupation).

Example:

Safeguarding Volunteering Project

To deeply understand the challenges, opportunities and strengths of volunteering locally, and to help determine where the Volunteer Sustainability Strategy needed to focus, we asked the community:

- What currently works really well in volunteering and what should we continue to do?
- What are the challenges? What stops people from volunteering?
- What would you like to see change for volunteering and volunteers?
- What ideas do you have to strengthen volunteering in your community?

Be curious

Assume nothing

Follow their lead

Dig deeper

Don't rush

Listen

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