

Achieving effective community engagement about biosecurity. A checklist for investing in engagement programs

This checklist should be read in conjunction with *Biosecurity engagement guidelines: Principles and practical advice for involving communities and Biosecurity engagement guidelines: how to develop an engagement strategy including a monitoring and evaluation component*. Available at dafg.gov.au/abares

Guideline	Remarks	✓	or	✗
1. Program formation				
Key stakeholders are engaged early to influence the boarder goals of the engagement program	If stakeholders are engaged too late, there might be a sense that the program has been imposed on them with not enough opportunity to shape its overall goals.			
The broader program goals allow for realistic timeframes	Effective engagement is difficult to achieve and maintain in short timeframes. Fund engagement programs that appear realistic, not those that seem overly ambitious. One option is to allow for staged funding to be made available with funding for the next stage depending on the success and outcomes of the previous stage.			
Where applicable, the engagement program is well integrated with the operational side of the larger pest control program	If the engagement and operational staff are not 'singing from the same hymn sheet' target groups will receive mixed messages. The two groups need to work together; their activities must complement each other.			
A program coordinator (team) is appointed based on both technical and people skills	People skills will help connect with stakeholder and target group representatives; to gain and maintain their support. A good understanding of the pest(s) in question is also important to underpin sound engagement.			
2. Program design				
2.1 Formulating an engagement strategy				
The engagement strategy is based on a clearly articulated objective	It is hard to aim for a target if that target is vague. The objective could be stated as an outcome based on what success would look like at the end of the engagement program.			
The engagement strategy involves a targeted approach for each target group	This involves biosecurity messages that are based on the 'What's in it for me?' principle and activities that have been designed based on target group preferences. To achieve this, the engagement strategy is best designed around input from target group representatives or people who know target groups well and by a baseline investigation to better understand target groups.			
The engagement strategy is based on baseline investigation in order to better understand target groups	A baseline investigation allows the engagement team to gain a good understanding of the local context and help design and finetune engagement activities. If the engagement team is involved in the investigation it is a powerful way to start building relationships with key people.			

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2.2 Designing engagement tools and activities				
A range of engagement tools and activities are used to reach target groups to cater for different learning styles	This includes tools that are passive (onus is on target group members to find information on websites, request copies of documents) and active ('information finds targets groups'; doorknocking, presentations as part of community events, shed meetings for growers).			
A significant number of engagement activities are built on social enablers, like trust, relationships, responsiveness and convenience	The research found that engagement is most effective if social enablers are involved. This could be achieved in various ways. The engagement team could focus on building relationships and gaining trust of key people in community groups. Key messages and documentation could be channelled through intermediaries (people or groups who have the trust or are in direct contact with members of the target groups).			
Print material is well designed	Print material is written in short succinct plain English, free of clutter and jargon. Material is designed to be practical, such as weatherproofed and designed to be placed where they are most likely be used, such as gloveboxes and sheds. Photos of pests need to be of high quality with the characteristics of the pests clearly recognisable.			
Where suitable, engagement tools and activities are tested	A draft document reviewed by a few target group representatives will help ensure the document is user-friendly. If a series of shed meetings are planned, the first two or three meetings could be used to seek feedback to finetune subsequent meetings.			

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2.3 Continual improvement		
Two-way communication is integrated throughout the engagement program	Two-way information flow is important between the engagement team and senior managers in key stakeholders organisations as well as target group representatives. Two-way information flow ensures that needs, issues and opportunities are communicated, allowing for quick responses. It also contributes to a sense of 'we're in this together' rather than 'us against them'.	
A monitoring component runs parallel with the engagement strategy	Monitoring allows for keeping track of the engagement process. This enhances adaptive management by helping to respond to issues and opportunities as soon as possible. A monitoring component works best if it is based primarily on the engagement team's information needs rather than solely on external requirements.	
A program evaluation is planned	An evaluation assesses the extent to which the engagement strategy has achieved its objectives; whether any unexpected outcomes have occurred; and the lessons learned for subsequent engagement programs.	
3. Overall		
The engagement team focuses on engaging the right people for the decisions and tasks at hand	It is not only important to have the right organisations, agencies or groups represented, but also the right individuals for the decisions or tasks at hand. It might be best, for example, to engage directly with senior managers if decisions relate to funding and how the engagement program could be best aligned with other initiatives or organisational goals. For decisions on how to best engage with target groups, extension officers and others who regularly deal directly with target groups might be most suitable.	
Target groups are kept up-to-date about the pest or engagement program's progress	If people's interest has been gained on an issue, through a presentation for example, and they never hear about the program again, it could lead to frustration and disengagement.	