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# TOOLKIT



Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport



**MANY**  
Mobile Access North Yorkshire



Lancaster University  
Management School



imagination  
LANCASTER

Lancaster  
University





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# To begin with...

## About this **TOOLKIT**

This toolkit shares social science research insights from the MANY (Mobile Access North Yorkshire) project: working to put 5G connectivity infrastructures in place for very rural communities.

## Who is it for?

The toolkit is designed to guide project managers and those in roles seeking to directly engage with communities in difficult and sometimes controversial projects.

## How to use the **TOOLKIT**

The toolkit is divided into three elements - **themes** (foundational elements for community engagement), **principles** (what community engagement is trying to achieve) and **methods** (how to achieve it). You can see how the Themes, Principles and Methods all fit together, 'in a nutshell', in the Toolkit Matrix (page 35) and how the methods are underpinned by the principles and themes.

## Why use it?

The toolkit is designed to help you use community engagement insights (themes, principles and methods) to shape your project, deliver real value, and put your own action plan in place.



### About **MANY** project...

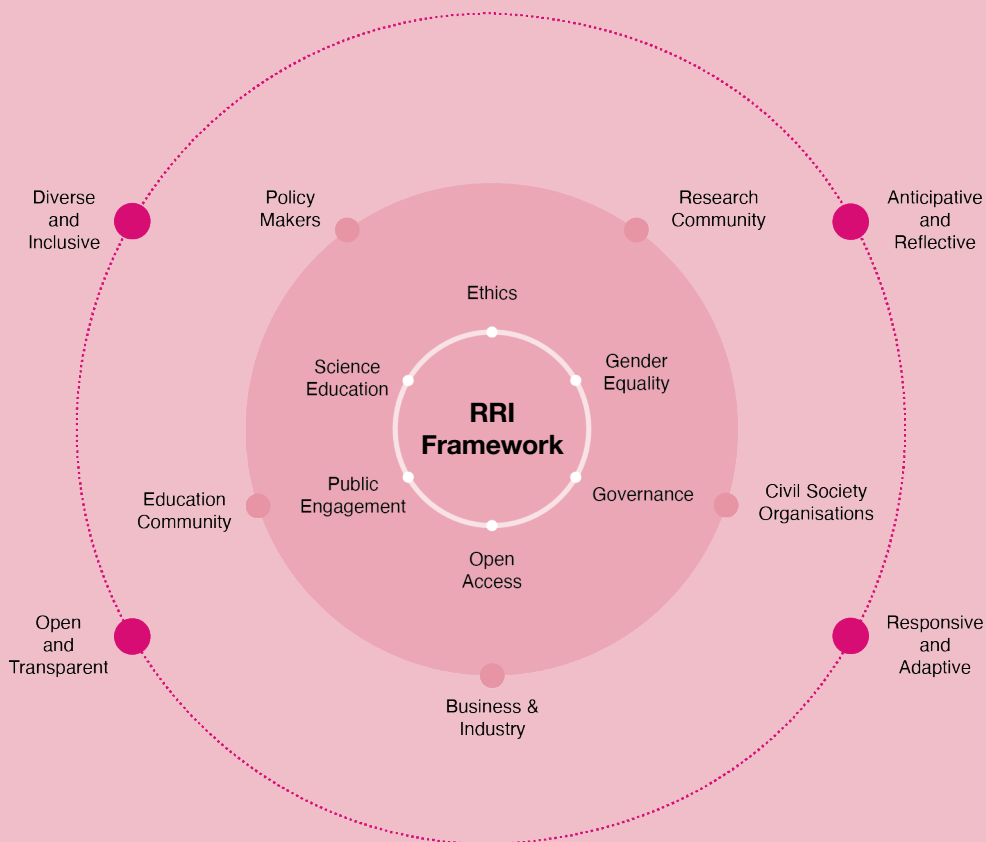
This toolkit is the outcome of our learning from the MANY project's community engagement. The MANY project is a 5G rural connectivity testbed and trial initiative that brings together a consortium of partner organisations including: Quickline Communications Ltd, North Yorkshire County Council, University of York, Lancaster University, AQL Ltd, FloCulture, Cybermoor, Safenetics, Wireless Coverage. The aim of the MANY project is to show how the provision of an enhanced communication network – based on new 5G technologies – helps very rural communities achieve socio-economic flourishing through improved connectivity where currently little or no connectivity exists. You can find out more about the MANY project at:

<https://mobileaccessnorthyorkshire.co.uk/>



## Theme 1

# Working with the community



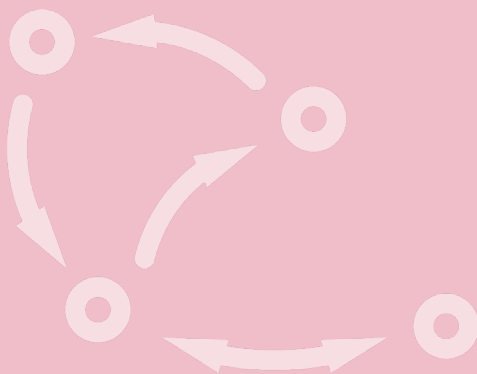
Source: Responsible Research & Innovation framework as defined in work by Owen, Macnaghten & Stilgoe, 2012\*

Owen, R., Macnaghten, P., & Stilgoe, J. 2012. Responsible research and innovation: From science in society to science for society, with society. *Science and public policy*, 39(6): 751-760.



## Theme 1

Our first insight is that community engagement transforms how projects are made valuable to communities. We used the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) framework to govern our project and this put inclusivity and the need to capture multiple and often contradictory voices of citizens at the heart of the MANY project. Community engagement is not a straight forward process so we identified four principles - engage early and often, be transparent, inclusive, open and honest – and a variety of methods to develop an understanding of everyday rural community life, the entanglement of peoples lived experience of home, work, business, community and connectivity technologies. An inclusive approach to community engagement helped the project develop an in-depth understanding of how rural communities value connectivity technologies both socially and economically, and brought to light key community concerns about the possible introduction of new digital infrastructures.







## Engage early and often

---

### Good for

- Advocating the project
- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice
- Building trust

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
- M2** Attend parish council meetings
- M3** Regular social media updates
- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M5** Working with community groups
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms

---

Engage early and often to enable the capture of diverse community voices, and to maximize the opportunity for these voices to shape your project's outcomes: through community engagement events, opening a dialogue at Parish Council meetings, a dedicated project website or webpages, newsletters, mailings, social media, and qualitative research interviews. Regular engagement throughout the life of a project, using a variety of methods, will keep the community involved as the project evolves and develops.





## Be transparent

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### Good for

- Building trust
- Connecting communities and members of the project team

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
  - M2** Attend parish council meetings
  - M3** Regular social media updates
  - M4** One-to-one interviews
  - M5** Working with community groups
  - M9** Face-to-face community events
  - M10** Online community event
  - M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms
- 

Be transparent with communities throughout the life of the project to build trust. Your understanding of the social, technical, political and economic aspects of your project will grow as you engage with communities and project members. But you will need to generate mechanisms for the community and your various project members to raise concerns, ask questions, and have them addressed. MANY was consistently transparent about which communities were being considered for connection and the technologies likely to be used: initially very uncertain, this became progressively concrete. Making clear how unfolding decisions reflect community engagement is critical.





## Be inclusive

### Good for

- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice
- Building trust
- Reaching whole community

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
- M2** Attend parish council meetings
- M3** Regular social media updates
- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M5** Working with community groups
- M9** Postal leaflets
- M10** Collaboration with other digital
- M11** infrastructure projects
- M1** Face-to-face community events
- M2** Online community events
- M3** Provide multiple engagement platforms

Put inclusivity at the heart of your project ensures everyone in the community has the opportunity to have their voice heard and influence project outcomes. Acknowledge diversity within your community, anticipate potential barriers to engagement, and use multiple engagement platforms. Not all participants are comfortable enough to talk at community meetings, take part in research interviews or are able engage via video conferencing perhaps because of poor connectivity, so use multiple methods.





## Be open and honest

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### Good for

- Advocating the project
- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice
- Building trust

### Methods

- M5** Working with community groups
- M6** Postal leaflets
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M10** Online community events

---

Be open and honest in community engagement. By highlighting the challenges experienced by these types of projects, working with multiple partners, finding suitable methods to create a dialogue with your community, and by acknowledging the project as a 'testbed' and a 'trial', it is possible to help communities anticipate mistakes and misfires as part of the learning the project is designed to catalyse. MANY, for example, openly shared the challenges the project faced because of the global pandemic. Being open and honest will help you build a trusted relationship with your community.



# Setting up for knowledge exchange



Our second insight is that running complex projects requires a holistic approach and sets up knowledge exchange. By gaining a holistic understanding of what is happening across the entirety of your project, including understanding the complex mechanisms required to make your project work, you will be better positioned to use what you learn from community engagement to influence the project outcomes. You will need to use a variety of mechanisms and methods to connect people across the different project elements, to encourage knowledge exchange and sustain dynamic information flows. MANY created connections across project groups, encouraging ‘knowledge activism’ whereby people routinely worked to identify and address knowledge gaps and ‘institutional voids’ where there was nobody to do a key piece of work that needed doing. We also connected to other project teams – sharing our growing knowledge.





## Allocate the role of boundary spanning ‘knowledge activist’ to one or two project members

### Good for

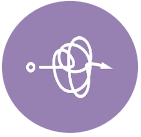
- Advocating the project
- Gaining understanding of community connectivity in place

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
- M2** Attend parish council meetings
- M3** Regular social media updates
- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M8** Connecting place based structures
- M9** Face-to-face community events

Explain to all project members who your boundary spanning knowledge activists are, the purpose of their role and how they will work. Knowledge activists provoke change by sharing and connecting knowledge. Having project members understand this role will help your knowledge activist do their job, and help the project to develop and prosper by providing an important mechanism for joining-up thinking and knowledge exchange. Celebrating positive outcomes that result from this role as the project unfolds is important to demonstrate the value of the role to those you are trying to include in your activities.





## Be open to where the boundaries are in the project

### Good for

- Setting project boundaries

### Methods

- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M7** Collaboration with other digital intrastracutre projects
- M8** Connecting place based strcutures
- M12** Regular project meetings

Boundaries usually emerge as projects progress, stopping the dynamic flow of information across different elements of a complex project. Boundaries typically emerge when different experts work together in a new setting. It is important that project members do not make assumptions about where boundaries are, but rather look out for the emergence of boundaries.

Boundaries may be inter-organisational or between groups of experts that use different technical language or logics to make judgements. Project tensions tend to emerge at boundaries.





## Create knowledge sharing mechanisms within the project and lead knowledge sharing activities

### Good for

- Reaching whole community
- Reaching communities with project concerns
- Finalising tech requirements with community

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
- M2** Attend parish council meetings
- M3** Regular social media updates
- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M5** Working with community groups
- M6** Postal leaflets
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M10** Online community events
- M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms
- M13** Follow-up telephone calls/emails

Your project needs you to put in place knowledge sharing mechanisms and activities to support effective knowledge activism. Project meetings, smaller inter-organisational meetings, collaborative events with other projects - conferences, workshops, seminars - are all mechanisms for knowledge activism and knowledge sharing. Make sure that your knowledge sharing activities emerge from the coordinated efforts of project members: get people involved and advocate knowledge sharing through inter-organisational meetings.



# Generating joined-up thinking



Our third insight is that projects benefit significantly from joined-up thinking. Joined-up thinking requires each of the different experts on the project - technicians, use case leaders, community engagement specialists, community members - to know what they are trying to achieve in relation to others. The RRI framework helped us to co-ordinate joined-up thinking in situ, connecting our place specific struggles and ambitions through common principles of action. By practicing joined-up thinking you will be in a better position to anticipate and manage the scale and complexity of potential impacts of the project on your community. Different methods can help you identify and resolve emerging tensions and knowledge gaps: within the project, between the community and the project, and within the community itself. Joined-up thinking will enable you to: develop a deeper understanding of your community in relation to your project, identify project and community activities that are not yet joined-up, and enable you to put a better digital infrastructure in place.





## Develop a peripheral vision

### Good for

- Reaching whole community
- Gaining understanding of community connectivity in place
- Mapping out infrastructures to generate opportunities for collaborations and coordinated actions
- Bringing together people with different perspectives

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
- M3** Regular social media updates
- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M6** Postal leaflets
- M7** Collaboration with other digital infrastructure projects
- M8** Connecting place based structures
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M10** Online community event
- M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms
- M12** Regular project meetings
- M13** Follow-up telephone calls/emails

Developing peripheral vision will help situate your project within the specific place and community you want to impact. First, identify the key people that have a potential interest in your project. These people are beyond the boundaries of the project, and often occupy key roles in your community. Next, ask them to share their local knowledge and help you develop a place centered approach to your project. Engaging with key community members, local NGOs and other organisations of interest to your community will generate new enquires and conversation that enable you to unfold new, innovative action plans. Coordinating your plans with interested external parties will open up new opportunities for collective action, further supporting socio-economic flourishing in place.





## Make transparent different social worlds & institutional logics at play

### Good for

- Setting project boundaries
- Mapping out infrastructures to generate opportunities for collaborations and coordinated actions
- Reaching communities with project concerns
- Bringing together people with different perspectives
- Connecting communities and members of the project team

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M5** Working with community groups
- M7** Collaboration with other digital infrastructure projects
- M8** Connecting place based structures
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M10** Online community event
- M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms
- M12** Regular project meetings

By recognizing the value of each form of expertise and different interests that are brought together in a complex digital infrastructure project, expansive learning can be generated. This requires identifying the different worlds and directing project team members differences between them, the logics that operate within each, and how these logics might bring key groups to reach certain kinds of conclusion. The key idea behind this principle is that from understanding comes compromise and innovative ways forward.





## Reflect and understand tensions within a place

### Good for

- Mapping out infrastructures to generate opportunities for collaborations and coordinated actions
- Reaching communities with project concerns

### Methods

- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M5** Working with community groups
- M7** Collaboration with other digital infrastructure projects
- M8** Connecting place based structures
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M10** Online community event
- M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms
- M12** Regular project meetings

Developing a more holistic understanding of place demands that you take steps to understand the tensions between the different stakeholders engaged. This knowledge offers the foundations for reflective and reflexive conversations about the projects innovative next steps. Build key points of reflection into your project, and use local, situated knowledge to inform what the project becomes, what it delivers to whom and to shape the benefits you realize for different groups: the project sponsors, the project members and the community it is designed to help.





## Anticipate differences and question assumptions

### Good for

- Reaching communities with project concerns
- Bringing together people with different perspectives

### Methods

- M4** One-to-one interviews
- M5** Working with community groups
- M8** Connecting place based structures
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M10** Online community event
- M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms

As part of the reflexive process, your project should seek to anticipate and continuously question its assumptions about what you know, and what you think external key stakeholder groups know. This is a difficult and engaging process, but represents a key aspect of putting the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) framework into practice.





## Develop mechanisms to identify and resolve tensions

### Good for

- Mapping out infrastructures to generate opportunities for collaborations and coordinated actions
- Connecting communities and members of the project team

### Methods

- M1** Recruiting local community champions
- M7** Collaboration with other digital infrastructure projects
- M8** Connecting place based structures
- M9** Face-to-face community events
- M10** Online community event
- M11** Provide multiple engagement platforms

Use social scientific enquiry to put in place project mechanisms that will drive joined-up thinking and overcome and resolve tensions in a place. Many university-based researchers are interested in supporting these kinds of projects. Include researcher time in your project proposal and enroll expert knowledge activism and intervention. Alternatively, you could develop a project brief and assign responsibility to a project member to do this work. Include in the brief a requirement to evidence how the tension resolution process informs and improves the emerging project plan as the project progresses.



MANY

# Methods



This part of the toolkit outlines the methods you can use to deliver on each of the three themed insights presented: **Working with the community**, **Setting up for knowledge exchange**, **Generating joined-up thinking**. We introduced Principles for each theme to help you think about what you are trying to achieve through your project, but in this part of our toolkit we now turn our attention to how you might do this.

Each method is linked to a theme and the principles that underpin it. You can see how the Themes, Principles and Methods all fit together, in a nutshell, in the Toolkit Matrix (page 35). Here we introduce each method by answering two questions: “What it is?” and “How does it work?”. Our aim is to help you imagine how you can use each method in your project.

Remember, every project is different and this toolkit is designed to help you think through what methods will best suit the aims of your project; we do not set out to tell you what to do. Your project will have its own peculiarities, rules, constraints and opportunities and you will need to make judgements about what might work best in your own, unique context.

The Toolkit Matrix (page 35) provides an ‘in a nutshell’ view of how the different methods fit together to create knowledge flows and a knowledge infrastructure that will really help your community engagement finding feed



## MANY

into and shape your project. The Toolkit Matrix helps to reveal the value of using this toolkit to help you put your own action plan in place. An action plan will enable you to make visible both the tangible and intangible knowledge flow mechanism you are putting in place to support a continued dialogue, and situated, place-based knowledge generation and sharing for your projects and your communities. Your action plan will make your intent much more transparent, enabling you to better curate multiple and varied community voices and use them to shape what your project becomes and delivers.





# M1

## Recruiting local community champions

### Good for

- Advocating the project
- Reaching whole community
- Connecting communities and members of the project team

### What is it?

A local community champion for a project (and perhaps more specifically for a digital infrastructure project) is someone that resides locally within the community who is willing to advocate the benefits of connectivity technologies to parish councils and the community on a voluntary basis. Such champions may be local community leaders and/or those with good technological knowledge.

### How does it work?

The project community engagement team with the help of parish councils and councillors' identify and recruit local community champions who are willing to share their knowledge about the project and its technology, answer their questions and build trust with the wider community.



# M2

## Attend parish council meetings

### Good for

- Advocating the project
- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice

### What is it?

A parish council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of people in the parish. They do this by holding regular parish council meetings attended by elected parish councillors' and members of the community, to discuss issues relevant to their parish, such as management of local facilities, through a democratic process.

### How does it work?

Project engagement teams liaise with parish councils and parish councillors, in the project location, to request the opportunity to attend and present at parish council meetings to ascertain whether the project has support from community leaders. These meetings allow community members to get together and hear each other's views, concerns, and provide opportunities for project members to source potential leads for use case development and listen to community views.



# M3

## Regular social media updates

### Good for

- Advocating the project
- Reaching whole community

### What is it?

Social media updates (e.g. news, case studies, promotion of events, reports etc) should be managed and posted on social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn by the project Communications team.

### How does it work?

Regular social media updates provide information on the progress of the project, to show the project is being transparent and listening to the wider community, but also sharing information with funders and other digital infrastructure projects. This should be done through the development of a project social media strategy led by the project Communications team. Social media updates also provide a mechanism for on-going two-way dialogue between the project and the local community.



# M4

## One-to-one interviews

### Good for

- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice
- Building trust
- Reaching whole community
- Setting project boundaries
- Gaining understanding of community connectivity in place
- Reaching communities with project concerns
- Bringing together people with different perspectives

### What is it?

One-to-one interviews allow individuals to discuss their experiences, aspirations and concerns with connectivity technologies in a private setting. Interviews are normally face-to-face, by telephone or video call with a project researcher. Interviews provide an essential qualitative research tool to listen to the community, to gather individuals' perspectives, and to provide a mechanism within the project for the community to have a voice and influence how the project develops

### How does it work?

Interviews can be designed in a semi-structured format with questions that guide the interview to answer specific research questions, while providing the freedom to enable discussion, share ideas and innovative thinking. Interviews can commence once ethical clearance has been granted and research participants have provided consent.



# M5

## Working with community groups

### Good for

- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice
- Building trust
- Reaching communities with project concerns

### What is it?

Every community is made up of a range of community groups. These might include local resident or area-based groups; communities of interest, faith cultural-based groups; local community and voluntary groups; and local third sector organisations.

### How does it work?

Engaging with the community can be challenging for short-term projects and are not always welcome by all the community. Such tensions can potentially be helped, resolved or even avoided by working with trusted local community groups and third sector organisations who know the community well, understand their wants and needs, and possess local knowledge.



# M6

## Postal leaflets

### Good for

- Reaching whole community

### What is it?

Project communication materials in the form of printed leaflets should be distributed and posted to households residing in communities likely to be impacted by digital infrastructure projects, particularly in those areas with poor digital infrastructure.

### How does it work?

To ensure inclusivity, postal leaflets should be drafted and distributed by the project Communications team and written in a way that is jargon-free, in plain English, while providing clear examples of how the project is likely to affect different individuals and sections of society, together with contact details.



# M7

## Collaboration with other digital infrastructure projects

### Good for

- Mapping out infrastructures to generate opportunities for collaborations and coordinated actions
- Bringing together people with different perspectives

### What is it?

Collaboration between other digital infrastructure projects is a key mechanism for bringing people together working on different projects, gaining differing perspectives and generating an understanding of the difficulties and challenges involved in running such complex projects.

### How does it work?

Projects should seek possible ways to collaborate with other digital infrastructure projects, such as through attending organised events organised by national stakeholders such as UK5G, Tech UK and DCMS, or by attending and participating in events organised by individual projects. Such events enable projects to network, share knowledge, contribute to learnings, and collaborate on future work and research.



# M8

## Connecting place-based structures

### Good for

- Gaining understanding of community connectivity in place
- Mapping out infrastructures to generate opportunities for collaborations and coordinated actions

### What is it?

Mapping and connecting place-based structures provide an overview of digital infrastructure projects in place.

### How does it work?

Undertaking the exercise of mapping place-based structures such as community and local government assets, land use, facilities, and digital infrastructure helps build an understanding of community connectivity and digital infrastructure projects in place, connecting place-based structures to generate opportunities for collaborations and coordinated actions.



# M9

## Face-to-face community events

### Good for

- Advocating the project
- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice
- Building trust
- Reaching whole community
- Reaching communities with project concerns
- Bringing together people with different perspectives
- Connecting communities and members of the project team

### What is it?

Face-to-face community events held within a venue in the local community provide an opportunity to gather project members together and engage in-person with members of the community.

### How does it work?

Face-to-face community events should be designed to allow community members to meet and interact with the project team face-to-face, ask questions, raise any concerns, and get to view any relevant technologies. It also provides opportunities for project members to meet with other project members demonstrate project technologies and liaise with use case stakeholders. Such events should be held in venues that are easily accessible for the community and the project team, and publicised via multiple engagement channels, with a specific focus on the targeted community.



# M10

## Online community event

### Good for

- Reaching communities with project concerns
- Bringing together people with different perspectives
- Connecting communities and members of the project team

### What is it?

Online community events can be held over a variety of online platforms. Commonly used platforms include Zoom, MS Teams and Skype that provide an opportunity to gather project members together with members of the community online.

### How does it work?

When face-to-face community events are not possible (such as during a global pandemic, when project members are unable to travel, or due to financial or time constraints), projects should strive to host online community events to continue social engagement. Such events need to be meticulously organised, that involve a balance of presentations and audience participation. Ideally the event should be managed by a chair and supported by facilitators that keep the event on topic and within time constraints.



# M11

## Provide multiple engagement platforms

### Good for

- Providing everyone with an opportunity to have a voice
- Reaching whole community
- Reaching communities with project concerns
- Bringing together people with different perspectives
- Connecting communities and members of the project team

### What is it?

Projects should provide a package of multiple methods to engage with communities to ensure inclusiveness and demonstrate transparency.

### How does it work?

To ensure the community has a variety of ways of engaging with the project, multiple engagement platforms should be provided and made available for individuals to communicate with the project. Platforms should include: email, telephone, social media, project website, and traditional post.



# M12

## Regular project meetings

### Good for

- Bringing together people with different perspectives

### What is it?

Project meetings should be held regularly with members of the project team from all of the different stakeholders organisations. This is particularly crucial for projects with stakeholders from different sectors and differing work practices and organisational cultures.

### How does it work?

Members of the project need to attend regular project meetings, either monthly or fortnightly to have a grasp of what is happening in the project, to remain up to date, share knowledge, and provide opportunities for questions, concerns and setting actions, milestones and ongoing agendas for the project. Ideally meetings will be a mix of online and in-person meetings and organised by specified members of the project.



# M13

## Follow-up telephone calls/ emails

### Good for

- Finalising tech requirements with community

### What is it?

Follow-up telephone calls and emails provide on-going engagement with members of the community participating directly in the project.

### How does it work?

Provision of regular one-to-one community engagement with community members participating in the project through follow-up emails and telephone calls is essential. Such communication helps develop and finalise use cases; provides updates on the installation and operation of digital infrastructure being installed; clarifies technological requirements for the community to be able to access new digital infrastructure; offers guidance in using new digital infrastructure; and provides the opportunity for questions and sign-posting individuals to external organisations for support (digital skills/health and social care).



# Is this toolkit useful?

If you have used this toolkit and found it helpful, or want to share your ideas and insights so that we can improve it, please get in touch with **Katy Mason** [k.j.mason@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:k.j.mason@lancaster.ac.uk)

Further information about the development of the **toolkit** and the **MANY project** can be found here.

<https://mobileaccessnorthyorkshire.co.uk/discussion-findings/>



# TOOLKIT

Method x Theme

Theme 1 Working with the community					Theme 2 Setting up for knowledge exchange			Theme 3 Generating joined-up thinking				
Principle 1	Principle 2	Principle 3	Principle 4		Principle 1	Principle 2	Principle 3	Principle 1	Principle 2	Principle 3	Principle 4	Principle 5
Engage early and often	Be transparent	Be inclusive	Be open and honest		Allocate the role of boundary spanning 'knowledge activist' to one or two project members	Be open to where the boundaries are in the project	Create knowledge sharing mechanisms within the project and lead knowledge sharing activities	Develop a peripheral vision	Make transparent different social worlds & institutional logics at play	Reflect and understand tensions within a place	Anticipate differences and question assumptions	Develop mechanisms to identify and resolve tensions
M1 Recruiting local community champions	●	●	●		●		●	●	●			●
M2 Attend parish council meetings	●	●	●		●							
M3 Regular social media updates	●	●	●		●		●	●				
M4 One-to-one interviews	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
M5 Working with community groups	●	●	●	●			●		●	●	●	
M6 Postal leaflets			●	●			●	●				
M7 Collaboration with other digital infrastructure projects			●			●		●	●	●		●
M8 Connecting place based structures					●	●		●	●	●	●	●
M9 Face-to-face community events	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
M10 Online community event		●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●
M11 Provide multiple engagement platforms	●	●	●				●	●	●	●	●	●
M12 Regular project meetings						●		●	●	●		
M13 Follow-up telephone calls/ emails							●	●				



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