



Action Planning

What is ... Action Planning?

Action Planning is an event that is held to provide an opportunity for all sections of the community to work with specialists and professionals from various disciplines to investigate planning and urban design issues.

Typically a multi-disciplinary team of 10-14 people from various interested organisations facilitates the event. Experts may be planners, architects, environmentalists, economists or social workers. The event is hosted by a partnership of local interests e.g. the Council, the Strategic Health Authority, a developer.

The process follows through a number of stages – briefing by key stakeholders, familiarisation with the area, workshops on particular topics, and/or design issues, brainstorming, analysis, report back, publication and distribution of report and action points.

When should you use it?

It is most suited to addressing specific design, development and planning issues or specific problems such as traffic congestion. In some situations they can be useful for consulting on wider community or neighbourhood based issues. The criteria for use tends to be the following:

- When you are looking to involve a particular community or group
- When you are seeking to break down barriers
- When you are trying to involve communities in planning and design processes
- When you want to expose “experts” to users’ points of view

Why use this technique?

Action Planning events bring together “experts” and the community. It provides an opportunity for all sections of the community to work with specialists and professionals from various disciplines to investigate planning and urban design issues.

What type of information does it produce?

Predominantly qualitative information – ideas, comments, suggestions, observation etc... This is information that cannot easily be analysed but provides detailed quality information that identifies issues in depth.

What are the advantages?

- It provides detailed community-based consultation
- It enables people to deal with relatively large and complex issues
- It gives people access to experts to aid the process
- It can obtain wide and detailed feedback
- It breaks down barriers

What are the disadvantages?

- Ensuring attendees are representative is difficult
- It can be dominated by a few if event is not carefully managed
- They can be complex and difficult to organise
- If there is no definable community it will be problematic

What are the costs?

- It is relatively inexpensive to run if experts attend without demanding fees
- There needs to be well co-ordinated with all the information available in advance and a good cross-section of the community represented
- You have to fund the preparation and production of all materials
- You need to hire a venue and account for staff time (the use of Council venues would minimise costs).

What are the practicalities?

- Clearly define the “community” you are consulting
- Be clear about what you hope to achieve from the exercise
- Ensure facilitators are clear about their roles
- Give thought to the collection of feedback and how outcomes will be fed back to the community
- Ensure that the needs fed back to the community are ones that they recognise