



Module Five

Community Engagement

2024

Training
Resources

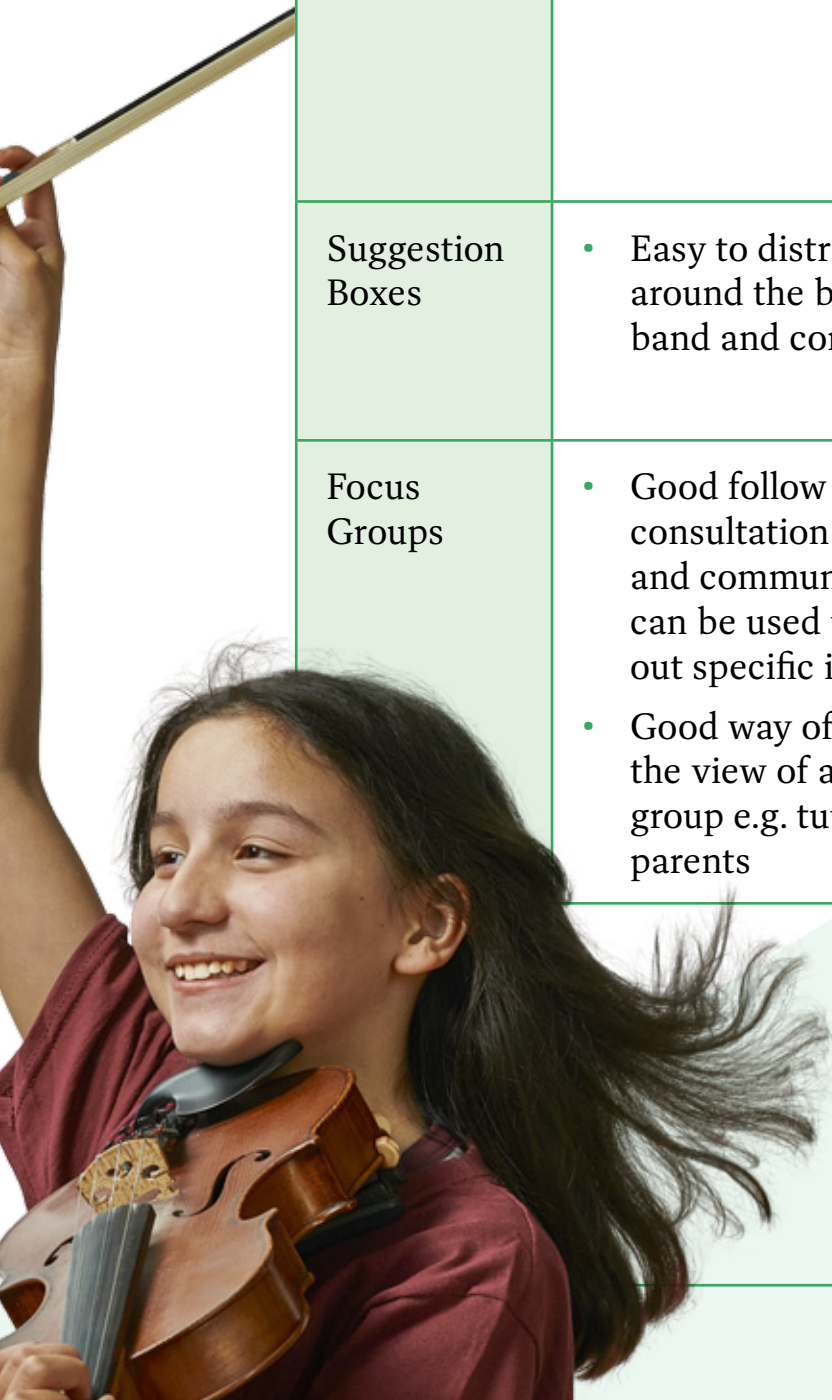
There are many good reasons why branches and bands would consult with their members and the wider community such as:

- To inform the branch/band committee about the views, aspirations, visions and requirements of its members and the wider local community ... and find out how the branch/band can meet them
- To find out how the branch or band is viewed; positively and less positively
- To identify gaps in provision which could be met by the branch/band

If we accept the importance of consulting with the community it is important that branch/band volunteers understand the ways by which it might seek to engage the wider community. There is a variety of possible community consultation techniques:

METHOD	PROS	CONS
Community Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of input to the process (can engage a lot of people both internal and external to the branch) • Can be carried out in a statistically relevant manner • Can tease out a lot of issues • Can use new technology approaches to support engagement(especially by younger members) and to facilitate much more efficient analysis (e.g. Survey monkey) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be time consuming • Not all branch/band or community members want to fill in a formal questionnaire • Response rate can be low if posted out

METHOD	PROS	CONS
Branch Consultation Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can engage across membership; genders, age groups, non-players and parents • Can pull the wider membership around the branch/band 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone wants to speak at an event • Young members are not always attracted by what they perceive as a formal event • Not every branch or band has a volunteer who feels comfortable facilitating such an event
Suggestion Boxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to distribute around the branch/ band and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable returns • Attract rogue comments
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good follow on to consultation events and community audits can be used to tease out specific issues • Good way of getting the view of a specific group e.g. tutors, parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can become 'talking shops' • Can be dominated by one or two strong voices or views



METHOD	PROS	CONS
Semi-structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a list of key questions is developed in advance this can be an effective way to secure the views of key stakeholders e.g. Local Council Officer/ Funders/Arts Officers • Can be carried out face to face, by telephone and by email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be difficult to get key stakeholders to commit to the time required

In some cases voluntary/community groups have undertaken Community Consultation Events in a ‘cosmetic’ manner to inform applications for external funding and to be ‘seen to’ consult. However, well governed branches/bands should undertake regular members and community consultation processes in order to better inform them about ‘how they are doing’ and how they could better meet the needs of members and the community.

The benefits of effective community consultation are as follows:

- It provides up to date information to support branch planning and decision making
- It provides unbiased information
- The information/discussion is not always dominated by ‘the loudest person in the room’
- It has potential to be inclusive; it can include existing branch or band members and non-branch/band members; people from non-traditional/non Irish/pipe band cultural background
- Applying it can prove an effective mechanism for promoting the branch/band across the community

Applying it to Your Branch...

If well governed Standard branches/bands are to effectively use community consultation to support branch/band planning and decision making they should undertake the following actions:

- Define what information the branch/band requires and why it requires it
- If the information is required to support external funding applications, confirm with the funder the breadth and quality of consultation derived information it requires
- It should establish a working group to lead the community consultation process
- The working group should develop a consultation plan; this is a simple Action Plan which sets out:
 - What do we want to know?
 - Who do we want to engage?
 - What is the most effective way of engaging these people/ communities/ constituencies?
 - What place or time will work best?
 - Who will take the lead?
- It is important that an effective communication plan underpins the consultation plan. Many branches/bands have become very effective at using social/digital media. This could be used in order to promote consultation events as well as traditional branch/parish/community bulletins

It is recognised that undertaking consultation can be new work for branch or band volunteers; they may not feel comfortable or may not have had a direct experience in undertaking consultation processes. It is important to recognise that they should be open to and seek external support and help including that from the existing Rural and Urban Networks.