

GUIDE: Developing an appropriate engagement approach

This resource accompanies the tool to help you identify the best approach to engagement for any given activity. This will help you complete a contextual analysis when beginning an engagement activity or project.

Contextual analysis

When you begin a project, examine the background or environment in which you will run the engagement. This contextual analysis will help you understand the factors that affect the method or results.

A contextual analysis can take many forms depending on the nature of the project and the organisation/s and stakeholder/s involved. Consider the following:

Organisational factors:

- What is the organisation's history of engagement? What is its public perception? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

Community factors:

- What is the history of the community? Does the community have experiences with your organisation? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Is there community need?

Political and governmental factors:

- What legislation is in place?
- What is the public discussion at the moment? Is there media attention in this space?

National and regional trends:

- Have similar engagements been conducted locally, regionally or nationally? What has impacted them for better or worse?

These factors and trends constitute the context for engagement. Understanding their intersections and impact on the engagement activities is essential to success.

Some methods of contextual analysis include:

- desktop review of internal documents and reports, relevant organisational policies, relevant legislation and relevant media
- literature review of existing research in the space you are going to be working in
- interviews with relevant staff or community members
- review previous projects or strategies of a similar nature.