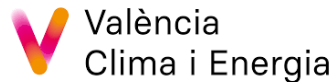




The catalyst for social innovation in the energy market

Engaging with Vulnerable Households – A Practical Toolkit



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Abstract

This document sets out guidelines and a toolkit for practitioners looking to create an engagement strategy for energy projects involving vulnerable groups. We present the academic and grey literature perspectives on what engagement means, why engagement fails to occur, and barriers to the involvement of vulnerable groups in research. We then put forwards solutions and strategies, derived from academic and grey literature, as well as from research projects and organisations in the energy or social domain, with four key best practices:

- Building trusting relationships
- Building in equitable processes and procedures
- Ensuring diversity of membership
- Ensuring tangible benefits for participants.

The document also outlines barriers and solutions to engagement in the identified POWER UP project business models. Finally, we also put forwards several engagement models and interactive tools which can facilitate the design of an engagement strategy.

Introduction

This Deliverable, entitled Knowledge Transfer on Engagement with Vulnerable Households, was prepared as part of Work Package 3 for the POWER UP project. **The document is intended to be used as a practical guide and toolkit for practitioners looking to engage not only vulnerable households in social energy projects, but other partners and stakeholders as well.** The document was created following a methodology that was developed in participation with the POWER UP project Partners, in order to produce a guide which would contain the most relevant and useful information for practitioners in the social energy space.

The **ENGAGER Right to Energy toolkit**, a document compiled by academics working in the energy poverty and justice fields, calls for democratic, open and transparent dialogues to boost trust and encourage participation, and placing citizens' needs and social values above shareholder interests. They also call for more research to understand the "limitations of people's engagement and to find creative ways to overcome them"; in taking up this mantle, we hope that this document provides a resource for practitioners and academics to commence the process for more just inclusion in energy processes.

As such, the document adopts the subsequent structure. We begin with an outline of the methodology, then we provide a critical review of academic literature on engagement, the importance of participation, and the challenges and proposed solutions to engaging with vulnerable groups, with attention to the POWER UP project's six business models. We then introduce models of participation found in the literature, and provide details of other projects' strategies, challenges and solutions, as well as listing suggested interactive tools.

Quick Links

In order to navigate the document, we provide some 'Quick Links' to allow the information required by the user to be accessed as easily as possible.

- **What can we learn from the academic literature on participation?**
 - a. Go to Page 7
- **Are you interested in common strategies used by other projects and organisations?**
 - a. Building trusting relationships – go to Page 14
 - b. Equitable processes and procedures – go to Page 20
 - c. Diverse membership – go to Page 23
 - d. Tangible benefits – go to Page 27
- **What are the barriers to engagement in the POWER UP Business Models?**
 - a. One Stop Shops – go to Page 30
 - b. Energy communities/cooperatives – go to Page 31
 - c. ESCOs – go to Page 33
 - d. Appliance Leasing – go to Page 33
- **What can we learn from common pitfalls and examples of bad practice?**
 - a. Go to Page 34
- **What are some different project engagement models from the literature?**
 - a. Go to Page 35
- **Are you interested in interactive tools for engagement?**
 - a. Go to Page 41

Methodology

Firstly, a literature review¹ was carried out of both academic and grey literature, on the theme of approaches and strategies to engagement. As there is relatively little material available on the engagement of vulnerable groups in the energy domain, this search was expanded to include engagement of vulnerable groups in any research field or project study. Typically, this material was most common in medical and health-related research, although the ideas and strategies outlined remained transferable to the aims of the POWER UP project. Secondly, a review of the community engagement approaches undertaken by EU-funded energy and energy poverty related projects. This was achieved by searching for projects already known to the POWER UP partners, then systematically using the [Energy Poverty Advisory Hub Atlas](#) (EPAH Atlas) to find further initiatives and projects.

An initial presentation of selected findings from this literature review was delivered to partners as part of a University of Manchester-led session at the POWER UP project meeting in Valencia, Spain on 7th April 2022. The methodology and outcomes of this exercise are presented in Annexe 1. The POWER UP Consortium partners were then consulted on the following questions in order to guide the production of the Deliverable, in order to best serve the partners' needs. The answers given are also presented.

¹ The literature review was carried out using the following search terms: Engag* AND Hard to reach; Engag* AND vulnerable; Engag* AND Communit*; Engag* AND tool*.

1. What information is the most important for you to obtain from the deliverable for you to devise your engagement strategy?
 - a. A user-friendly, easy to navigate guide with clear, simple information, broken up into sub-headings.
 - b. Examples from other projects, good and bad practices, target group segmentation and engagement strategies.

2. Which would be the most helpful approach for engaging you (the pilots) in the task?
 - a. The Partners commented that their engagement in the task had been partially fulfilled with the capacity-building exercise and rounds of feedback in Consortium meeting on the structure and content of the Deliverable.
 - b. Partners commented that multilateral meetings and opportunities to discuss strategies with other Partners would be a useful method of engagement. As such, workshop was proposed for September 2022 to share the contents of the guide and toolkit, space for discussion and sharing, and to provide feedback for improvement on the document.

The resulting deliverable which will now be presented is based on the answers to these questions, in order to maximise our own pilots' engagement with the information provided.

Literature Review

In this section, we present the results of the academic and grey literature review on engagement, particularly on the engagement of vulnerable groups in research and project work.

What is Engagement?

Engagement with individuals, communities or stakeholders can be defined as the act of building a relationship, and includes all of the methods that are used to connect and communicate with them in order to build that relationship (Canelas & Mundo, 2021). Stakeholders are defined as those who stand to gain or lose from a decision; thus, effective community engagement allows stakeholders to make well-informed decisions, effectively implement programs and services, generate empowerment and increase community resilience, and allow for transparent governance (Ross et al., 2014; Capire, 2015).

Public participation is highly varied and diverse with regards to who participates, what they participate in and how they participate (Chilvers et al., 2021). **Forms of engagement can include information sharing, educating, capacity building, co-creation, collaboration, and development, to name but a few.** It is worth noting however, that although communities are groups of people with commonalities and connections, they still consist of individuals who will have a diversity of priorities, perspectives, values and interests. Engagement thus must take on multiple forms and be flexible to the context in question; a focus on community inclusivity and enhancement can help to ensure a cohesive process (Lane & Hicks, 2017).

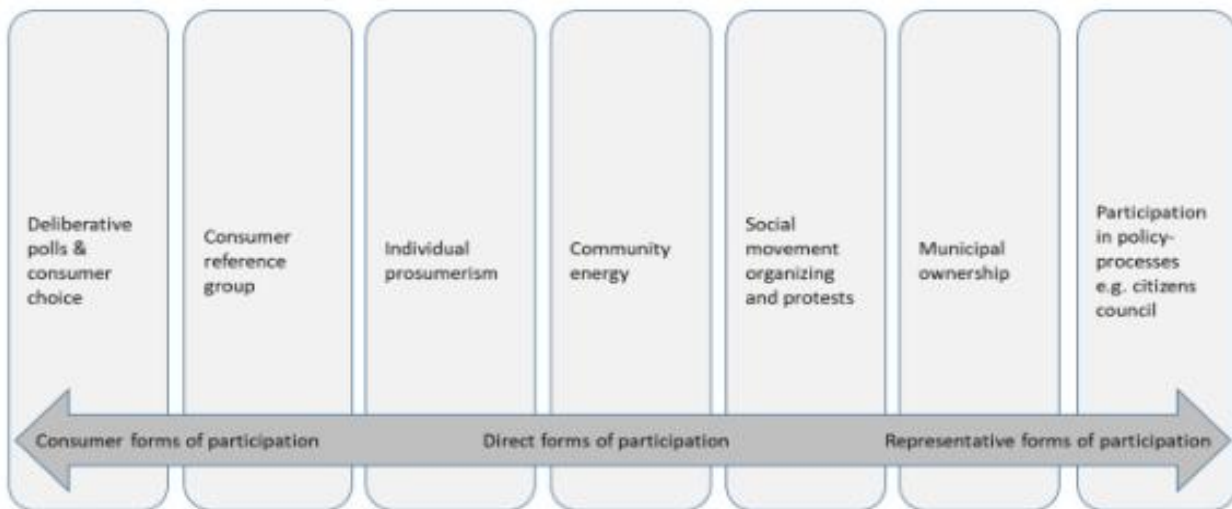


Figure 1 - Common types of citizen participation from the energy democracy and citizenship literature (Wahlund & Palm, 2022)

Energy democracy and energy citizenship are core tenets of the EU Clean Energy Package, which stipulates that **people should take a key role in the energy transition, creating active, engaged citizens with ownership and control over energy production and consumption.** Wahlund and Palm's literature review on the two concepts led to Figure 2, which details the types of citizen participation connected with energy democracy and citizenship, and whether they are linked to consumer, direct or representative participation (Wahlund & Palm, 2022). **Citizen participation is seen as a way to ensure collective benefits, affordable services, a faster renewable energy transition and increasing awareness of energy issues, such as energy poverty.** Unfortunately, research by Lennon et al. found that people felt that they did not have real agency in the energy transition other than as a consumer, and that moreover, they considered that consumer empowerment was an illusory concept (2019).



(Photo Source - Hannah Busing via Unsplash)

Nevertheless, academic literature has a lot to say about the importance of using people's lived experiences in research; as Walker and Day state, we cannot address energy poverty adequately without involving vulnerable groups throughout the decision-making process (Walker & Day, 2012). **By engaging vulnerable groups, voices and experiences that may not otherwise be heard are given**

space in the debate, and can lead to empowerment from this involvement in decision-making spheres. This engagement is fundamentally necessary in order to create effective and inclusive policies that are appropriately adapted to people's lives (Middlemiss et al., 2018). Failing to include vulnerable groups in co-production processes can risk reinforcing structural and institutional biases, and perpetuating marginalisation (Mulvale & Robert, 2021). Indeed, research suggests that 'transition arenas' in the sustainability space are 'distinctly technocratic', focussing on entrepreneurs, innovations and those with elite and specialist knowledges, which work to exclude a wider spectrum of actors across society (Chilvers & Longhurst, 2016) – a phenomenon which is often expressed in the energy cooperatives space.

Engagement can also fail to occur, according to the KAP Gap theory, as a result of a gap between K - Knowledge, A - Attitude - and P - Practice - i.e. just because an individual knows something, it does not mean that it will change their attitude, and if their attitude is changed, then it does not mean that they will take action in practice (Canelas & Mundo, 2021). **Goedhart et al. (2021) posit that many forms of public engagement have been, and often still are, carried out without acknowledging the diversity of groups, perspectives, norms and values that exist within a community, which can result in the KAP Gap outlined above.**

Involving Vulnerable Groups in Research – Key Challenges

The reasons for vulnerable groups not being included in research, both intentionally and unintentionally, can arise from failures in research design, a belief that vulnerable people can be hard to reach or difficult to include in research, or poor inclusivity. A Local Energy Advice Partnership evaluation report from Clackmannanshire, Scotland of frontline energy services, found that vulnerable people are more likely to face barriers when accessing essential services, with inflexibility of solutions and inaccessible communications leading to distress and lack of engagement (LEAP, 2021). The Right to Energy toolkit specifies that a lack of engagement can stem from poor knowledge and skills among frontline workers and organisations with regards to energy poverty. This can be structural, such as organisations having broad remits beyond energy, or a lack of funding for example, or in many cases a lack of awareness of what the condition is and its causes.

Vulnerable communities and individuals are often labelled as ‘hard to reach’ or seen as ‘problematic’; this places the blame and onus on those communities for being unresponsive to outreach. Instead, switching the narrative and thinking about why a service might be hard for them to reach by considering the barriers that prevent them from using it can provide a clear starting point (Knightsmith, 2021). Thinking about the needs of vulnerable groups from their perspectives and seeing them as full partners in initiatives, as opposed to delivering from a service solutions or professional practitioner perspective, can also improve outcomes (Moore, 2015).

A meta-study carried out by Goedhart et al. (2021) identified five key elements which can hinder engagement in research, to which we add ‘stigma’, as identified by Watson (2005). We outline these in Table 1 below.

Key Factor	Description
Unfamiliarity with Research	Can limit people's confidence to participate if they feel they do not fully understand the topic, or do not feel that their opinions will be accounted for.
Mistrust	Mistrust in governing bodies, authorities and academia, as well as disenfranchisement with governance structures.
Poverty-Related Stressors	Participation in the research is costly, with regards to missed work or job seeking time, or incurs costs related to childcare or transport.
Language-related Stressors	Particularly pertinent for those who have recently migrated, those with learning difficulties or low proficiency in the language of the research.
Lack of Willingness	Lack of willingness, time or motivation to be engaged, with key links between this factor and socio-economic marginality or difficulties.
Stigma	Associated with labelling, stereotyping or shame.

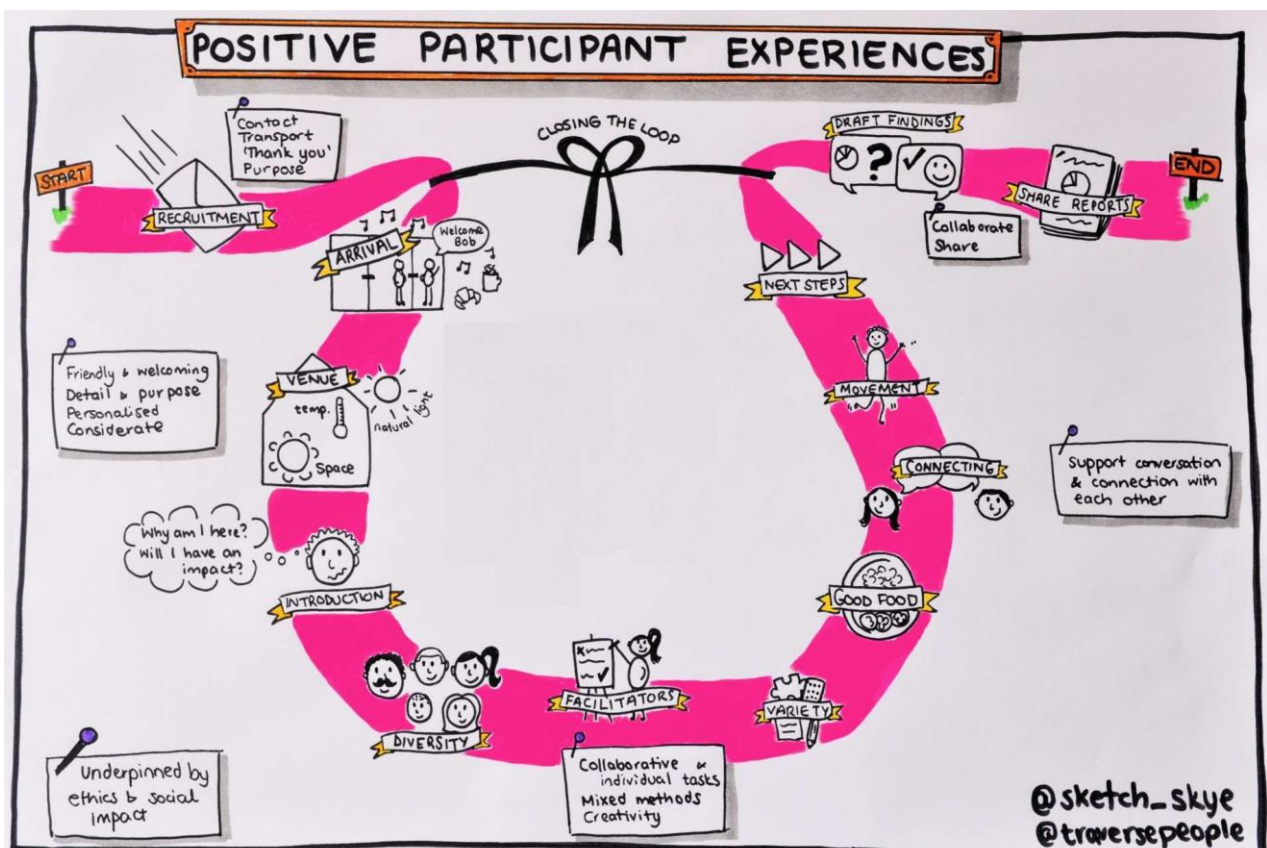
Another meta-study by Amann & Sleight (2021) categorised the common challenges - both anticipated and reported - that researchers identified when carrying out studies on public service delivery with vulnerable groups. These are summarised in Table 2.

Key Challenge	Description
Resources	Constraints on resources can involve unexpected costs such as extra travel or translation services, compensation of participants, or trying to balance co-production with institutional or funder priorities.
Initiating Contact or Collaboration	Difficulty in initiating collaboration, whether due to gaining trust and establishing relationships, determining who belonged to or represented a particular vulnerable group, or access difficulties.
Logistical	Organising suitable times and locations to meet participants, due to social, economic, physical or medical circumstances, communication challenges, managing power dynamics and fear of overburdening contributors.

Overcoming obstacles and barriers to engagement

Summary review of academic recommendations and project approaches

There are numerous factors and elements that should be considered prior to embarking on an engagement strategy for the involvement of vulnerable groups in research or project work. We arrange this section around a summary review of engagement strategy characteristics to aid public participation by Shalowitz et al (2009), selected for relevance to the specificities of the POWER UP project.



(Photo Source: Traverse)

Firstly, we provide long text for each key engagement pillar for those who require more information and detail. It should be highlighted that although comprehensive, this is not an exhaustive list, and further research and adaptation to the contexts of the pilots should be considered. At the end of each section we provide **a summary table** for quick reference, which are organised as follows: the table headings list the key engagement pillars as put forwards by Shalowitz et al (2009), with sub-strategies under each of these pillars derived from the literature review, as well as a review of engagement strategies utilised by initiatives, both energy-related and wider citizen engagement projects. We also put forwards some key benefits and challenges of these approaches, as well as listing the reference projects.

Building Trusting Relationships

Trust is a key factor that underpins the success or failure of projects, and is contingent on building close relationships, consistency, having an open and authentic process, and providing participating communities with decision-making roles (Lane & Hicks, 2017). Close relationships with emotional engagements can develop between researchers and research participants, particularly when sensitive topics are being discussed, which can lead to challenges when the study ends. **Explaining from the outset the length of the research, reminding participants of the number of remaining sessions and providing references to support services** after termination can help avoid awkward situations (van Wijk, 2014). In work carried out by Beighton et al., the researchers found that working with established groups - either **friendship or community groups** - led to views being shared more openly and trust built quicker, as members encouraged and validated each other's contributions (Beighton et al., 2019). The REACH project utilised this approach, tapping into pre-existing channels, such as workshops in schools for young people, dissemination at local churches/religious centres and municipality offices, which proved successful in recruiting participants as well as building on **pre-existing community ties**. The Groundworks Charity attend **local community events** so that residents can meet the team and gain familiarity with energy concepts as a method of gaining trust.



(Image Source: Traverse)

Transparency is also key to building trusting relationships. Decide Madrid is an **e-participation platform**, which makes all data and information open access to empower the community to generate ideas and boost inclusivity in the city's management. **Often, completely open access data sharing is inappropriate, particularly**

when intimate personal data or health information is involved; nevertheless, covering the basics with participants, including explaining how their data will be used and stored, what is being done to ensure their safety and security, the length, aims and outcomes of the project are crucial.

Watson (2005) suggests that for facilitators, adopting the role of a **'friendly visitor' who offers support rather than intervention** can help to reduce stigma and suspicion, whilst the EMPOWERMED project advocates for **gender diversity amongst facilitators**, as well as ensuring that they have training on energy poverty prior to workshops. The Alliance Against Energy Poverty, in Catalonia, Spain, use the format of having no formal leadership in their sessions, instead, collectively addressing issues with and by people with lived experience of energy poverty. This helps to remove stigma and shame associated with the condition, as many others there have been in the same circumstances and have been helped by the group.

Critically, it should be noted that **choice of words and language** used, whether in printed materials, delivered presentations or in workshop facilitation, are not neutral (Pellicer Sifres, 2019). For example, the words 'poverty' or 'being poor' **can stigmatise certain people**, leading them to shun places where they might be able to access help, particularly if they do not consider themselves to be in poverty or belonging to a particular group. **Words can also place responsibility on certain groups - for example, 'people unable to pay their bills' marks energy poverty as an individual problem, but 'people who can't afford energy due to high costs and inefficient housing' places the cause of the issue on structural and political factors.**

In addition, certain words and subjects, such as when discussing **'painful' or 'difficult' situations can trigger emotional responses** among participants, including anxiety, anger, fear and grief (Brankamp, 2021), which can have unpredictable outcomes. Ensuring that all those involved in the research or project are well prepared and that they listen to those experiencing such emotions with empathy can help manage such situations, for example, building up to sensitive topics by starting with less emotional questions (van Wijk, 2014). Alternatively, Warnestal et al. (2017) suggest **working with user personas, as opposed to speaking about intimate personal experiences**, which can avoid trauma and triggering negative emotions, whilst Taylor et al. (2018) scheduled follow-up sessions with their participants to ensure their wellbeing. Knowing your personal limitations, and **identifying areas where extra support or training are needed amongst the research team** could be valuable prior to carrying out engagement work. (Butcher, 2022). The **WELLBASED Project** utilised this approach, by **sharing stories of people in similar situations and asking people how much they could relate to these situations, rather than asking participants outright to divulge their personal circumstances**.

Engagement Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Key Themes	Benefits	Challenges	Reference Projects
Trusting Relationships	Empowering and educating facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally attuned, trained and skilled facilitators • Offering support rather than intervention • Awareness of personal limitations and identification of where extra training might be needed • Removal of formal leadership, collectively addressing issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased trust leads to increased participation, quality of research and reduced likelihoods of misunderstandings and insensitivities. • Increases quality and efficacy of the workshop for all stakeholders • Leadership and direction from those with lived experience can be invaluable for creating trust and opening up safe spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can take extra time and incur greater costs for increased training and support for facilitators 	EMPOWERMED Project STEP Project Energy Checks - Groundworks Charity The REBLE project Alliance Against Energy Poverty (APE) - Catalonia Energy Checks - Groundworks Charity

	<p>Transparency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully explaining the research aims, length, objectives, outcomes to participants. • Ensuring that participants know their rights, how their data will be used and stored. • Obtaining full and informed consent • Allowing access to data and information about the project/research 			<p>The REBLE project</p> <p>Decide Madrid</p>
	<p>Avoiding stigmatising language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of language which can be stigmatising or isolating • Awareness of emotional responses to subjects and situations • Sharing relatable stories and situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are more likely to share their experiences if they feel safe, listened to, and respected 		<p>WELLBASED Project</p> <p>Alliance Against Energy Poverty (APE) - Catalonia</p>

	Fostering close community ties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing references to support services after the project end • Building community ties and relationships, using existing community networks • Working with students and schools • Attending community events to meet the project team and raise awareness of the project • Bringing people together with shared lived experience to empower themselves and each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates investment in the community and respect/care for participants • Can increase the likelihood of longevity of the initiative beyond the end of the project timelines if citizens are engaged and invested • Working with existing networks/young people can snowball participation to a wider group • Fostering community ties builds trust and increases chance of project success 		<p>UPSTAIRS</p> <p>STEP Project</p> <p>COMACT Project</p> <p>Alliance Against Energy Poverty (APE) - Catalonia</p> <p>Energy Checks - Groundworks Charity</p>

Equitable Processes and Procedures

Equitable processes and procedures in a project – in other words, ensuring that the project is fair in both the way it is conducted, and in its outcomes – are key to continued engagement in an initiative (Lane & Hicks, 2017).

In this vein, the EMPOWERMED project developed a methodology for approaching households affected by energy poverty, which suggested that **gender/culturally sensitive communications should recognise different genders' and cultures' access to and consumption of energy and be aware of stereotypes and social norms**. The REACH project particularly emphasised the **benefits of multi-channel communications strategies** to reach a broad range of people, as well as the need for those **communications to be relevant for the local identity, situation and culture**. Both the STEP project and LEAP service advocate for **simple and quick referral services** with broad recruitment criteria as a best practice to reach energy poor consumers. Simple referral means a lower chance of drop-out in the first instance and can avoid the process being overwhelming or off-putting for people facing difficult situations.

Engagement Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Key Themes	Benefits	Challenges	Reference Projects
Equitable Processes and Procedures	Gender and culturally-sensitive recruitment methods & content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of different genders' and cultural access to and consumption of energy Diversity of facilitators Awareness and avoidance of social norms and stereotypes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased facilitator diversity increases likelihood of participant diversity Decreased likelihood of cultural insensitivities or offence being caused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly context specific and context dependent – no one size fits all 	REACH Project The REBLE project EMPOWERMED Project
	Multi-channel stakeholder recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity of locations where recruitment materials are available Wide referral networks across a range of organisations Strong communications work with targeted key messages Utilisation of small energy-saving devices to increase visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More likely to recruit and engage a broader range of people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time consuming 	UPSTAIRS STEP Project Alliance Against Energy Poverty (APE) - Catalonia REACH Project

					The REBLE project LEAP Project
	<p>Simple Referral Mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong communications with simple, easy and quick referral mechanisms • Varied referral mechanisms – in person, online, phone • Broad inclusion criteria to avoid exclusion of certain groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to recruit people if the process is simple and quick • Offline recruitment means the elderly and those with no access to a computer/internet can join 		STEP Project LEAP Project (Local Energy Action Partnerships) The REBLE project

Diverse Membership

Language, literacy and communication barriers, as well as the use of challenging technical terms or concepts are all factors which can hinder an individual's ability to engage with energy issues and support (Ruse et al., 2020; Gaspari, 2020). *Wherever possible, resources and services should be delivered in the first languages of the target groups the study would like to engage, and that a translator is present if the facilitator does not speak the language themselves.* Providing *sign language* interpreters for deaf people, and *materials in Braille* for people with visual impairments should also be considered. *Many researchers advocate for conducting workshops that do not rely on words or language; for example, the use of pictures and diagrams, as well as creative interventions such as mapping and photography can be used to overcome linguistic barriers (Butcher, 2022).* This sentiment is echoed in the findings of the UPSTAIRS project, which advocate for "ease of use", whereby the process is intuitive and inclusive, and does not exclude any person or group for lack of knowledge. Both the SPEAK UP project and the Research Institute for Disabled Customers highlight the need for clear instructions, plain language and easy-read text, with images and diagrams, which increases comprehension and retention of information, but also creates an accessible format for people with learning disabilities or language difficulties.

The physical location of where research or project engagement will be carried out is critical, and can affect the content and quality of discussions (Petrova & Prodromidou, 2019). For example, cold-calling and doorstep surveys can trigger safety fears or suspicion among participants (Bouzarovski & Thomson, 2017). Aside from affecting the discussion, *locations for research should be assessed thoroughly for accessibility and suitability for the target group* that will be involved in the study, for example, ensuring that all people can access the location - ensuring there are disabled access, car parking and toilet facilities, and that the venue is near public transport links.



(Photo Source: Traverse)

'When', in addition to 'where' meetings will be, should also be considered; for example, finances can be tight later in the month which can limit some people's participation, they should not clash with religious or cultural occasions if those religions or cultures should participate in the event, or coincide with childcare obligations such as the school run, which may exclude single parents or women from participating (Goedhart et al., 2021). Knightsmith (2021) suggests that if it is difficult to attract people to come to your sessions, consider whether you can go to them, either in their home, online or in a neutral safe space close to their homes e.g. an existing mother-toddler group (Rayment et al., 2017).

Engagement Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Key Themes	Benefits	Challenges	Reference Projects
Diverse Membership	Accessible Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a translator, Braille/large print materials or interpreter where needed • Avoiding technical terms and concepts • Clear instructions, plain language, easy-read alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases comprehension and retention of information • Increases accessibility for people with language difficulties or learning disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be time consuming and costly to provide translators, interpreters etc. 	UPSTAIRS Research Institute for Disabled Customers Speak Up - Prioritise Me Project The REBLE project

	Accessible Locations and Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure locations are accessible for all mobility needs including access, toilet facilities and transport • Neutral safe spaces should be used • Awareness of religious or cultural clashes with timings • Consider using existing group times – e.g. mother and baby groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases accessibility of participation for all regardless of disability, gender, religion, culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a time and place that suits every need can be challenging; can consider multiple locations 	<p>Speak Up - Prioritise Me Project</p> <p>Research Institute for Disabled Customers</p>
	Alternatives to Words and Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative alternatives to words could include maps, photography, videos and diagrams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can spark new ways of thinking and doing • Accessible for all, people aren't limited by their language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be more challenging to clearly deduce findings and outcomes 	<p>WELLBASED Project</p> <p>The REBLE project</p>

Tangible Benefits/Supportive Reward Structures

By ensuring that a **session is time well spent for target groups will build confidence in the process** and increase likelihood of future attendance and prolonged engagement. Consider time spent reading or consuming communications materials, as well as time at physical meetings. **Having clear learning objectives, providing a chance to discuss/network/ask questions, and asking people what they would like to learn from the sessions will all contribute to a feeling of a session being worthwhile to attend** (Knightsmith, 2021). Many studies advocate for **ensuring that building capacity is a core part of the engagement** activity, promoting skills and knowledge which can lead to personal development and empowerment (Pinfold et al., 2015). Other approaches that can cultivate meaningful involvement can include focusing on real and tangible outcomes that have meaning to people as opposed to abstract scientific or project goals and ensuring that participants communicate their expectations for the project (Parveen et al., 2018).

Paying or rewarding participants as part of an engagement strategy is an ethical consideration and should be carefully reflected upon. Times of economic hardship and austerity have increased the difficulty of recruiting low-income participants, particularly those who are casually employed or paid per task, meaning that they cannot give their time for free. Amounts of pay could be benchmarked against local living wages. **Benefits for monetary reward can be a more successful recruitment process with greater participation, however, drawbacks can include false claims to meet eligibility criteria, pressure to provide data, or failure by participants to appreciate the risks associated with the research** (Warnock et al., 2022). Other studies label financial compensation for research participation as coercive, especially for low-income groups (McKenzie et al., 1999). **Compensation in-kind, such as small gifts or vouchers, volunteering at participants' own organisations or social visits can also be offered.** Other alternatives proposed include celebrating achievements together to mark the end of a project, officially recognising participants as members of the research team or co-authors or promoting visible engagement such as organising an event (Ayre et al., 2018; Beighton et al., 2019).

Engagement Strategy	Sub-Strategy	Key Themes	Benefits	Challenges	Reference Projects
Tangible Benefits; Supportive Structures	Compensation for Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a form of compensation for time spent – can be monetary, vouchers, food – depending on context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases participation from those who cannot afford to give up time freely – particularly key for vulnerable groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial compensation can have ethical consequences 	<u>The REBLE project</u>
	Education and Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity, promoting skills and knowledge towards empowerment • Providing chances to ask questions and network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring time is well spent leads to increased likelihood of future attendance • Goes beyond research as a transactional relationship 		<u>UPSTAIRS</u> <u>Alliance Against Energy Poverty (APE) - Catalonia</u>

Spotlight On: The REBLE Project

REBLE (Research Enabled by Lived Experience) is a lived experience advisory panel set up by Traverse, a social research consultancy based in the UK. REBLE consists of ten researchers from a range of ethnic backgrounds, sexualities and genders, ages, (dis)abilities and health conditions, who share their lived experience and expertise to improve engagement and inclusive practice in social research. We highlight key points from the Traverse/REBLE engagement strategy that we believe are best practices in this area in the box below.

Key Points for Best Practice

Designing the Strategy:

- Reflecting on what previous knowledge the research team have working with people with lived experience, what were prior successes and challenges
- Reflecting on who is benefiting from the research, and who is missing from it
- Understanding that no-one is “hard to reach” – new ways need to be found to engage people
- Accounting for the intersectionality of people’s identities – not just predetermined categories of vulnerability

During Recruitment:

- Dedicating adequate time and resources to the recruitment process
- Using social media and existing networks to reach out to people
- Committing to having conversations with potential applicants, answering questions and having all information available
- Creating an EasyRead recruitment flyer
- Making the application process available over the phone, in writing, via voice recording or video.

During the Project

- Reflecting on processes and procedures, who holds the privilege
- Collectively and collaboratively deciding on matters leads to meaningful inclusion and power sharing
- Participants are paid for their time

Engagement strategies in the POWER UP business models

In this section, we briefly introduce the five business models selected by the POWER UP project and explore some of the strategies that have previously been utilised within these models to overcome barriers to engagement. More details and information on the business models themselves can be found in POWER UP Deliverable 2.2.

One-Stop Shops (OSS)

In Europe, there are several examples of One-Stop-Shops (OSS), which can be grouped into **four categories**: **Facilitation** - providing advice and information on energy renovations; **Co-ordination** - which co-ordinate all market actors, suppliers and provide information; **All-inclusive** - where the OSS is the supplier of the full renovation package; and **Energy Service Companies (ESCO)** - the OSS is the supplier of the full renovation package and has guaranteed energy savings, which pay for the renovation.



The Limburg One Stop Shop

(Photo Source - WoonWijzerWinkel)

Some of the **potential barriers** to engagement with OSS include:

- **temporality** - whereby they are not permanent or long-term, due to funding ending or changing political support,
- **inappropriate staffing and resources,**
- **not being adequately user centric.**

[OECD research on OSS best practices](#) found that the most successful OSS are those that are built on user input, with open communication and flexibility to the needs of their users, as well as the removal of administrative burdens when serving vulnerable communities (OECD, 2020).

The Limburg [WoonWijzerWinkel OSS](#), implemented by POWER UP Partner, Gemeente Heerlen, opted for **visibility to overcome participation barriers**. The OSS is located in a shopping and leisure area, near a football ground which increases footfall to the set up. In addition, the

technologies and materials available are on display, which people can see and feel, to offer an experience to customers and make them feel more tangible and accessible. Recommendations from a [One Stop Shop in Edinburgh](#), Scotland (not specifically energy-related) were that **when working with people affected by poverty and poor mental health issues, thorough knowledge and confidence in the services and service providers that are being recommended is critical** (COSS Edinburgh, 2021).

Renewable Energy Communities and Citizen Energy Cooperatives



Ecopower's Community Wind Turbine in Eeklo

(Photo Source: Ecopower)

Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) are defined by EU regulations as legal entities which are open and voluntary, controlled by its members located in proximity to the renewable energy installation, in order to provide environmental, economic or social benefits as opposed to financial profits. **Citizen Energy Cooperatives (CECs)** are organisations that

provide an energy supply and other related services to their members with no geographic limitation. Typically, Energy Cooperatives buy or install and run renewable energy plants and sell the energy they produce to their members at fair prices. Although legally different, the barriers to participating in RECs and CECs are very similar, and hence we have grouped them together here.

Although EU legislation highlights the role of CECs and RECs in energy poverty alleviation (European Commission, 2018), unfortunately, **energy communities often have access barriers**, with a disconnect between those who benefit from them, and those who would benefit the most participating. A study by Hanke et al. (2021) found that those who engage with RECs are often middle class, retired men, usually with experience with engineering and technical training. **Barriers identified include the experience of financial scarcity, which can mean lower willingness to take financial risks, and a lack of time available for volunteering aspects which are often linked to membership.** Other barriers include a lack, or a perceived lack of social and economic

capital, and limited information about RECs (Fischer et al., 2020). The authors state that by considering different elements of justice - procedural, distributional and recognitional - in the creation of RECs, such as overcoming barriers to participation by offering lower share prices to vulnerable groups, increasing targeted information and engagement activities, offering lower tariffs and energy efficiency services to vulnerable groups, and addressing energy poverty in the organisational statutes, better engagement can occur (Hanke et al., 2021).



North Kensington Community Energy

(Photo Source - Repowering London)

An REC, [Repowering London](#), ensures that all sectors of the community are engaged by offering:

- investment for local people in receipt of welfare benefits or those under 25 for a 50% discount
- membership that starts at just £1 (1.16EUR) and internships
- profits reinvested into a local youth jobs programme
- assistance for those living in fuel poverty
- energy audits
- school visits
- energy efficiency workshops

Energy Service Companies (ESCOs)

Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) are companies that provide energy services for buildings, including the design, implementation and management of energy efficiency renovation projects. ESCOs can typically offer a specific financing solution for energy efficiency investments, which usually involves paying for renovation work upfront and providing a repayment plan with a service fee for the whole duration of the contract. **Barriers identified to the successful operation of an ESCO**, as identified by a survey of ESCO Facilitators (Mourik et al., 2014), were: **insufficient knowledge about ESCOs** by clients, **confusing information** available, **lack of motivation to undertake energy efficiency** works, and **mistrust** as ESCOs are commercial entities.



(Photo Source - Florian Olivo via Unsplash)

Appliance/Technology Leasing

Technology leasing is a business model where a technology provider (i.e. a manufacturer, a supplier, or a service provider company) leases energy-efficient appliances to households at a monthly rate, which includes full maintenance services for the duration of the contract. Little information could be found about barriers to engagement with this service due to projects such as [Papillon](#) being newly-founded, however targeted information campaigns and clear outlines of the benefits of leasing appliances to vulnerable groups is necessary.

When Engagement Goes Wrong

In light of the catalogue of good practices and solutions listed above, it can be useful to outline bad practices, and pitfalls of engagement and participation to avoid these occurring in Partners' projects. Empowerment can often be represented as the 'apex' of public participation models. However, if this is carried out without ensuring that communities or individuals have access to the resources or do not have the capacity or knowledge to manage the project in question, the results can negatively impact the community and damage trust. **Project leaders can use their authority to influence or exploit, such as deriving the benefits or accolades, or refusing to honour the agreement upheld when recruiting participants; feedback or input that is carried out, but not taken into consideration, or that is ignorant of the needs of some stakeholders; information that is provided but misrepresents an issue or manipulates participants into a certain way of thinking** – each of these can lead to **disengagement, disempowerment, undermine trust and constitute a misuse of participants' time and effort** (Organising Engagement, 2022).

The REBLE project, a lived experience advisory panel group, warns **against tokenism** in so-called inclusive research. They define tokenism as **"the superficial involvement of a group in a process in a way that is not truly inclusive and does not share power"**. The group produced a virtual play using the **Forum Theatre** method, presenting a scenario whereby a research project, which needed to use diverse voices, was tokenistic and not participatory. This forum play was based on real experiences of REBLE group members of research participation in recent projects. The audience was then asked to comment on how they could change the outcome for a truly inclusive and participatory process. Watching this play and the responses to it from those with lived experience can be very useful for practitioners setting up a project to consider aspects of their communication and strategy that they may not have previously reflected on.

The recording can be accessed here.

Lane & Hicks recommend that to deal with complaints, at a minimum, all projects must develop a management process, list complaints transparently on the project website and notify stakeholders about the procedure through which they can make a complaint. They also suggest staff receive training in conflict resolution and active listening, and to demonstrate that complaints are responded to in an adequate and timely fashion (Lane & Hicks, 2017).

Tools to Build an Engagement Strategy

Models of engagement

There is not a single best way to involve stakeholders in decision-making processes, as this depends on the project's aims, contexts, cultures, target groups alongside a multitude of other factors. However, many different models of community engagement and public participation have been developed by practitioners which can be used to assist in selecting an appropriate approach and tools. Approaches which were used in similar projects may not be the most suitable for the goals of another; requirements may also change during the lifetime of a single project, so being adaptable and flexible to the needs of those involved in a project is necessary (PlaceSpeak, 2015).



(Photo by Bamagal via Unsplash)

As such, we present a range of public participation models which were referred to in the literature. This list does not claim to be exhaustive, but rather indicative of the types of models that pilot projects may wish to follow when designing their participation approach. We highlight key pros and cons of each, and although designed to be general and applicable to any project type, we indicate which of the POWER UP business models may benefit the most from each framework.

1. The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation is a framework designed to differentiate the levels of participation for a particular project, depending on its goals, resources and priorities. The five levels are shown in the diagram below; each of which have a value depending on the project. "Inform" offers the lowest level of public participation, whilst "Empower" offers the highest level.
 - *Suited to:* This spectrum offers a useful starting point for all projects wishing to determine the level of participation required for their particular business model.
 - *Key Pros:* The model is descriptive, simple to follow and to understand, particularly for those new to engagement and participation.
 - *Key Cons:* The model only outlines the positives of participation at its most constructive, and does not consider how the 'promises' made to the public may be broken, or the consequences of the different goals (Organising Engagement, 2022).

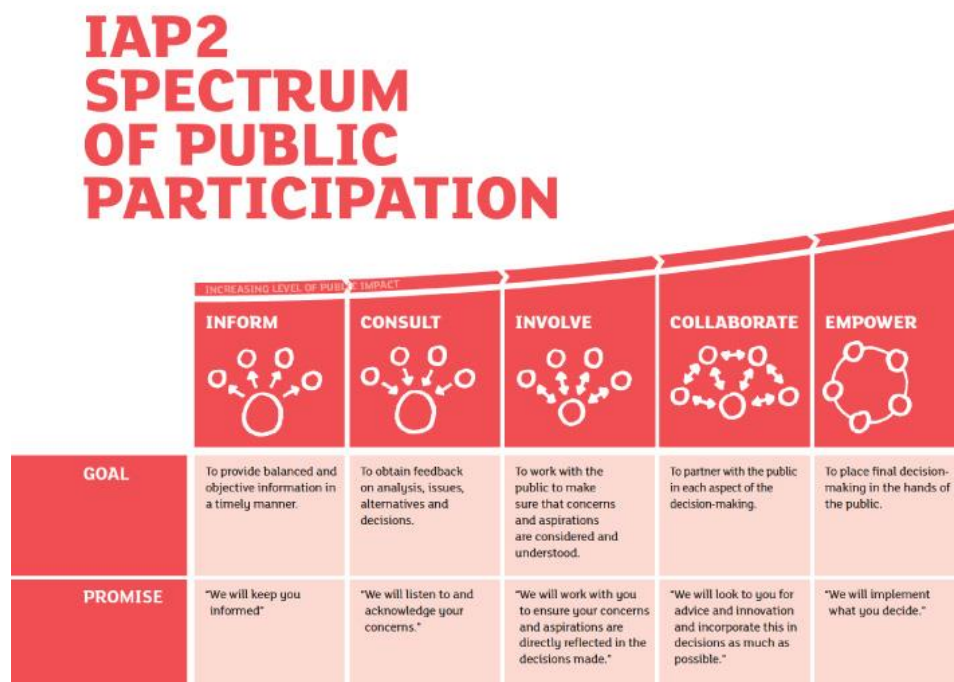


Figure 2 - The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Engagement

Image Source - PlaceSpeak

2. The Engagement Triangle model (shown below) assists project managers to identify desired outcomes of engagement based on three overarching objectives. It then breaks down those objectives into secondary and tertiary objectives, and then suggests appropriate tools and techniques which can be utilised to achieve those project goals.

- *Suited to:* Determining the methods that best suit the outcomes for all project types.
- *Key Pros:* Allows projects to identify the outcomes they wish to achieve, the most appropriate methods to achieve those outcomes and ensure maximum benefits from the project.
- *Key Cons:* Can be prescriptive and inflexible.

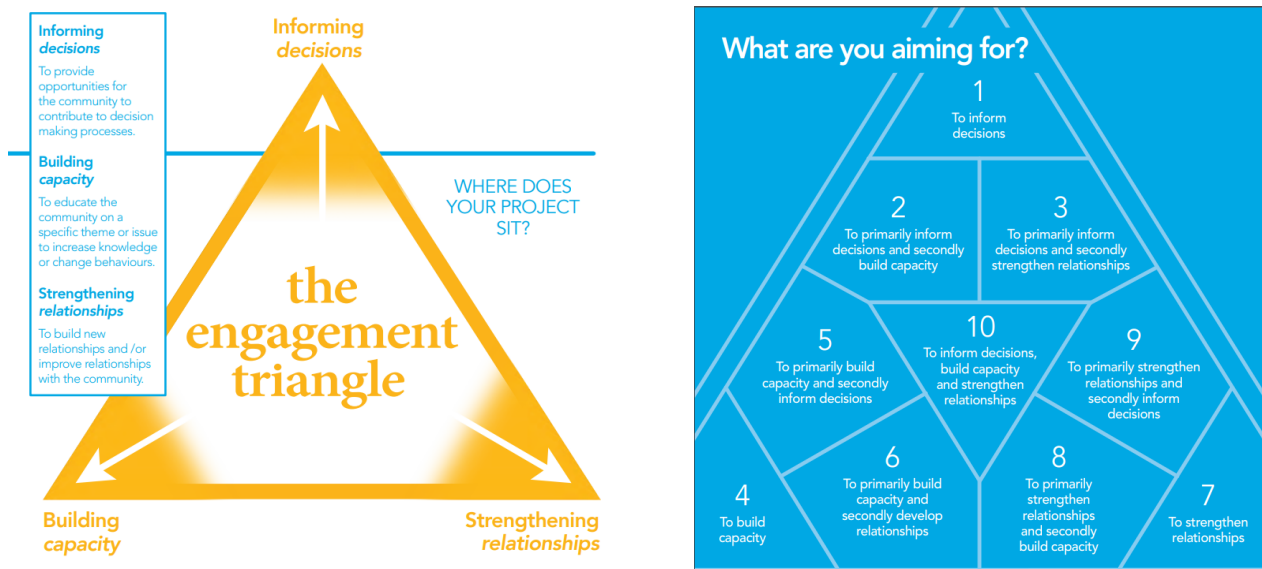


Figure 3 - The Engagement Triangle

Image Source – Capire Australia

3. The EAST Framework uses nudge theory, working on the premise that to alter someone's behaviour and prompt engagement, the intervention must be:

EASY: if a decision is easy, requiring little effort, it's more likely to be selected. This can include simplifying messaging, reducing the difficulty of taking up a service, or making a desired action the default.

ATTRACTIVE: if a message, piece of advertising or offer is attractive, people are more likely to be drawn to it. This can include using bold, unusual or striking images, fonts or messages, or the inclusion of incentives.

SOCIAL: people in general are social, and are more likely to get involved if others they know are. Using peer relationships and social networks, using social examples can reinforce participation.

TIMELY: Timings are essential; people are more likely to be influenced by immediate impacts, costs and benefits over long-term effects.

- *Suited to:* Effective communications. **May be well suited to communicating and organising One Stop Shops**, or used as a framework for communicating the benefits of involvement in **RECs/CECs**, or undertaking work from an **ESCO**.
- *Key Pros:* **Helps to combat drop-out or non-engagement** if people feel that a task has too many obstacles or is inappropriate for them.
- *Key Cons:* Certain decisions are made to look more enticing than others, which can influence people's behaviour and thus **some critics argue it is ethically ambiguous** to adopt this method. Nevertheless, no choice is neutral, and will always contain some bias.

4. The ABCDE Building Blocks Framework aims to provide a transdisciplinary approach for designing behaviour-change programmes and initiatives. The framework is presented in the diagram below.

“Discover” is based on identifying goals, defining success, assessing and analysing past efforts, what is already known and aligning stakeholders.

“Define” relates to researching behaviours, motivations and barriers for the target group in order to build audience profiles.

“Design” involves the creation of content and planning of the delivery time, spokesperson and channel to best engage the target audience.

“Deploy” is the stage for implementation and evaluation of the project

- *Suited to:* **Effective behaviour change**. This may be well suited to **appliance leasing** models, due to the need for behaviour change from owning to renting, as well as **OSS** models where behaviour changes are needed when certain energy saving technologies are implemented in the home.
- *Key Pros:* Behaviour change is seen as **a process with clearly identified steps** which can be followed by projects to achieve the desired outcome.
- *Key Cons:* Detailed and multiple steps can be **time consuming** and go beyond the scope and/or resources of projects.

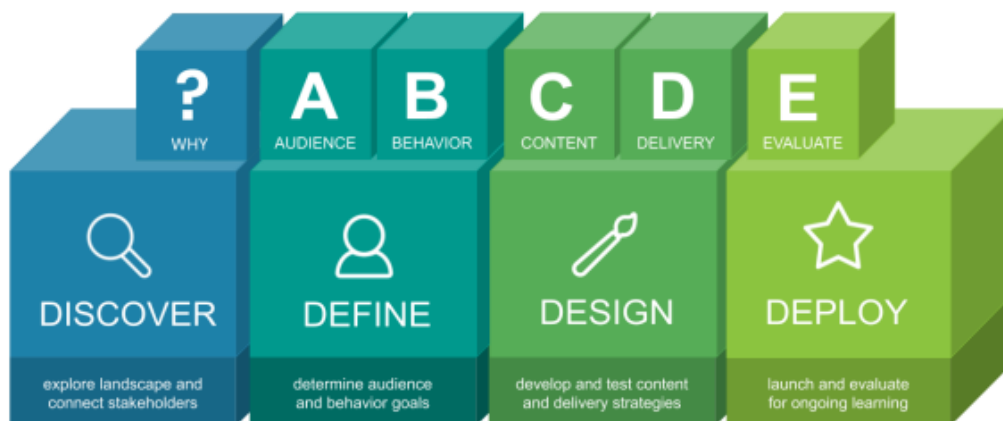


Figure 4 - The ABCDE Blocks Framework

Framework Image Source – See Change Institute

5. The COMPASS for Navigating Relationships framework (developed by Mulvale et al. 2021) pointing to the numerous elements that need to be considered and managed, to aid researchers when navigating vulnerability and empowering participants. COMPASS stands for Co-production: supporting Managers, preparing Participants, building Affinity, fostering Sensitivity and creating Safety. The Compass can be seen below. Greater detail is then provided in so-called ‘directions’ for each compass point.

- *Suited to:* Projects where fostering and managing relationships is key. This could be well suited to RECs and CECs, which are run by stakeholders, and can assist with generating lasting relationships and involvement in the management of the communities.
- *Key Pros:* Detailed information on how to navigate relationship creation, to avoid power imbalances and empower participants.
- *Key Cons:* Complex, wordy and academically orientated, so can be difficult to understand and translate to practice.

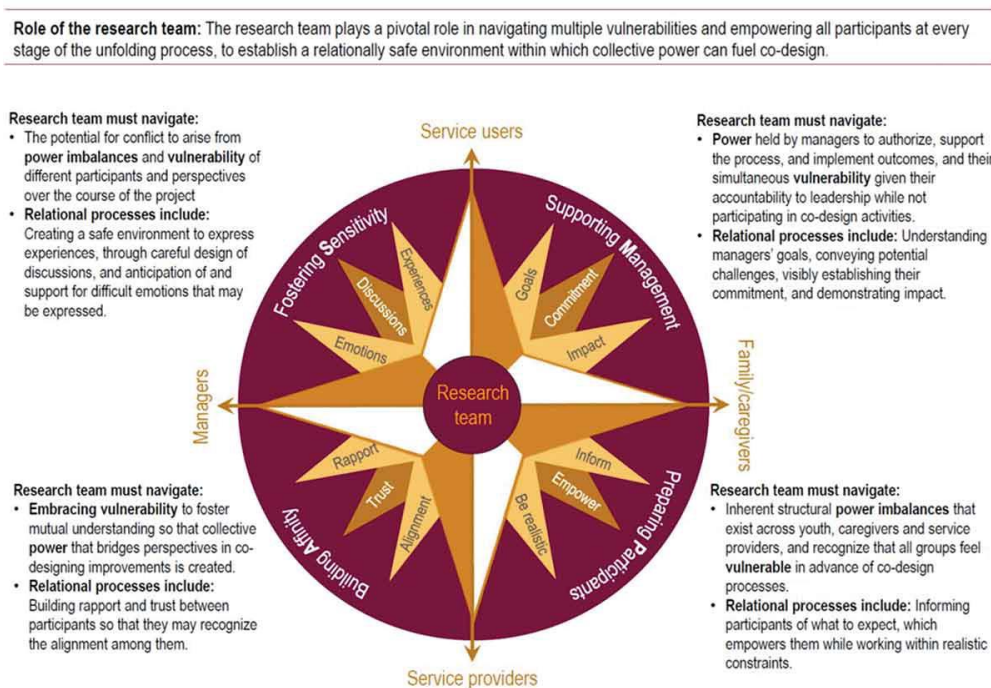


Figure 5 - The COMPASS Framework Image

Source - Mulvale et al., 2021

Catalogue of Engagement Tools

In this section, we highlight some interactive facilitation tools which can enable more accessible and engaging sessions with target groups using creative practices, technology and AI. Tools can be defined as “an object which aims to support people to perform a function or achieve an outcome that would otherwise have been more difficult”. They can be a critical function for inclusivity - affording an opportunity for all voices to be heard - allow for creative engagement, and to bridge divides, enabling people to work together in co-creation (Rice et al., 2016).

Tool Name	Information	Access (Cost, Availability etc)
AhaSlides	<p>AhaSlides is an interactive engagement presentation software tool which enables the presenter to collect question responses, share quizzes, polls, and Q&A in a range of question formats.</p> <p>Submissions are sent anonymously, which can remove any discomfort or fear of stigma when providing answers or feedback.</p> <p>For many of the features, no writing is required, which can make it easier when working with people with certain disabilities and with those who are less comfortable in the language of the workshop.</p>	<p>Basic features are available free with an account.</p>
Conversation Cards	<p>Conversation cards provide positive question prompts around a specific topic, which have been developed to spark and support conversations.</p>	<p>An example of a company providing conversation cards tailored to specific topics,</p>

The concept of conversation cards could be adapted to the energy communities and energy poverty topic, providing a starting point for dialogue with vulnerable groups in situations where it might be harder for people to articulate their thoughts, situations or ideas.

including diversity and inclusion, is [Finkcards](#) – available at a cost.

Kahoot

Kahoot is a **game-based learning experience engagement tool**, whereby the presenter can create learning games or trivia quizzes.

Basic features are available free with an account.

These can be as long or short as required, and images, videos and diagrams can be added to the slides.

Leapfrog

Leapfrog provides a range of **free toolboxes for creative engagement**, developed from a UK Arts & Humanities Research Council funded project, closely collaborating with the public sector and community partners to design **innovative approaches for engaging groups** on different topics.

A range of completely free-to-use toolboxes are available.

Toolboxes pertinent to the POWER UP project include “Conversations at Scale” - enabling conversations with large or diverse groups of people - “Working with Young People” - engaging young people in creative and effective ways, and “New Team Tools” - helping teams from different services to work together effectively.

Mentimeter

Similar to AhaSlides, Mentimeter is an **interactive engagement presentation software tool** which enables the presenter to collect responses to questions, gain feedback, share polls, quizzes, wordclouds and more.

Submissions are sent anonymously, which can remove any discomfort or fear of stigma when providing answers or feedback. For many of the features, no writing is required, which can make it easier when working with people with certain disabilities and with those who are less comfortable in the language of the workshop.

The software is accessible on PCs and mobile devices. The basic features (up to two questions per presentation) are free with an account.

Miro

Miro provides a **visual collaboration whiteboard** with sticky-note and diagram functions, which works to **facilitate ideation and brainstorming**, as well as online workshops.

This is a good tool to use if workshops need to be conducted virtually, as well as allowing participation of those who are unable to attend in person as it can be used in a hybrid format.

The basic whiteboard package is available free with an account.

Otter.ai

Otter.ai is a service which provides **real-time transcription conversations**, both in-person and virtually, as well as allowing images, highlights and comments to be inserted afterwards.

Basic features are available free to individuals with an account.

Real-time transcription improves accessibility by opening attendance of workshops/presentations for those who may be hard of hearing, provides a record of what was said for those who could not attend, as well as for the purposes of transparency and accountability.

Participation Toolkit

This toolkit places in one repository a range of **tools, resources and guidance on different modes of planning community engagement**, organised into themes of consulting, involving, empowering and so on.

A range of completely free-to-use toolboxes are available.

The different toolkits include guidance and information on how to carry out and make the most of the format, such as focus groups, world cafes, citizens juries, online meetings etc.

Person-Centred Practices

Person-Centred Practices is a methodology to be used with people and organisations to ensure that **people are kept at the centre of the decision-making process and its outcomes**, keeping the focus on topics of importance to the people that the decision will affect.

A range of completely free-to-use toolboxes are available.

The linked website has a repository of resources which can support person-centred practices, including person-centred thinking,

values-based recruitment and working together for change tools.

Prezi

Prezi provides an **online and engaging alternative to Powerpoint/other presentation softwares with highly visual and animated templates**. It can also be used to design interactive maps and infographics for example. This can be a suitable alternative for any workshops taking place with children or families for instance.

Many features can be accessed with a Basic free account.

Quizizz

Similar to Kahoot, Quizizz is an **interactive e-learning platform** that allows the creation of quizzes, polls and presentations that can be accessed on any device.

Basic features available with a free account.

TalkingMats

TalkingMats can be used virtually using a tablet or computer, or using a physical mat and cards, and is a **visual communication framework which supports those with communication difficulties** to express their views.

It breaks down information into manageable pieces, and provides a structured and supportive space for people to share their thoughts and feelings.

TalkingMats provide a paid service, although have developed resources and templates available freely for those working with people with communication disabilities. These can be accessed [here](#).

Trans-PED Toolbox

This toolbox was created **to assist participatory action research** in the creation of Positive

The full toolbox is available free

Energy Districts. The toolbox introduces key tools including
Research co-design
Knowledge co-production
Impact and Evaluation
which are subdivided into further tools with details on when/why it should be applied and how the tool works.

What's Important to You? (WITTY)

WITTY is an iPad app - but can also be done on paper using the schematic - which enables individuals or groups to **map out visually community and personal assets that are important to them.**

Free beta-version available online.
Schematic onto paper free to use.

Originally designed for mental health purposes, the principle can be adopted for other uses, such as community mapping, visualising priorities and where people can engage with a problem.

Conclusions:

In conclusion, this document has set out guidelines and a toolkit for practitioners looking to create an engagement strategy for energy projects involving vulnerable groups. We present the academic and grey literature perspectives on what engagement means, why engagement fails to occur, and barriers to the involvement of vulnerable groups in research. We then put forwards solutions and strategies, derived from academic and grey literature, as well as from research projects and organisations in the energy or social domain, with four key best practices:

- Building trusting relationships
- Building in equitable processes and procedures
- Ensuring diversity of membership
- Ensuring tangible benefits for participants.

The document also outlines barriers and solutions to engagement in the identified POWER UP project business models. Finally, we also put forwards several engagement models and interactive tools which can facilitate the design of an engagement strategy.

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Annexes

Annexe 1: Outputs from Valencia Meeting April 2022

As a warm-up, the participants were asked, “What does vulnerable mean to you”; the purpose of this exercise was to show the diversity in understanding around one single word, and thus the need to account for multiple perspectives to build up a whole picture.

What does the word 'Vulnerable' mean to you? Mentimeter



Figure 6 - Word Cloud of Submissions by POWER UP Partners (Valencia, April 2022)

The presentation also included a capacity-building group activity, whereby Partners were divided into three groups, and each given an imaginary scenario of a locality wishing to implement an energy poverty intervention. The groups were then asked to:

- a) Review the information provided to identify potential vulnerable groups and the potential challenges the locality might face with regards to energy issues
- b) Identify key challenges that the locality might expect to face with recruitment
- c) Suggest engagement strategies the locality might use to achieve the aim of their energy poverty intervention
- d) Input any relevant experiences from their own regions that might be applicable to the scenario

This exercise was designed to promote creativity and imagination, particularly in the responses to part C. As the scenarios were imaginary, there were no constraints to the suggestions, neither were wrong answers possible. The aim was thus to potentially spark new ideas to overcome engagement barriers that might not have come to light when using the pilot projects as the working scenarios. Results from the capacity-building exercise are given in Annexe 1.

Group Scenarios:

SCENARIO 1:

Context A is an industrial and residential administrative ward of a large metropolitan area, with a population of around 100,000 people, consisting of many students and young people. Approximately 22% of the population belong to ethnic minority groups. Parts of this administrative ward are among some of the most deprived in both the city and the country as a whole, and ranking in the worst 10% nationally for barriers to housing and services and among the 5% most deprived areas for child deprivation.

Fuel poverty levels are higher than average, and several households suffer from overcrowding. Housing mainly consists of low energy efficient pre-1950s terraced houses, with some newer family homes and apartments. More than a fifth of the total population lives in shared private rented housing. Nationally, energy poverty is well defined and understood by practitioners, with large amounts of data collected on this topic.

The local municipality in context A is looking to conduct energy audits in homes in their ward to identify energy saving measures and give financial advice on energy matters for households that may be vulnerable to energy poverty.

SCENARIO 2:

Context B is a city of 80 000 inhabitants. The city has suffered from declining industry and the disappearance of its coal mining sector and is rapidly depopulating as a result. The city is made up of several fragmented settlements, held together by one major transport route and a more developed urban core. Much of the city's housing stock dates back to the late 1950s and early 1960s, and is of poor quality, although newer housing consists of two new high-rise housing estates, one at the northern and one at the southern end of the city, built to higher standards—more floor space, better quality insulation and infrastructure—than the older structures.

The housing districts are connected to the city's district heating network, with its typical lack of metering at the household/building level, as well as inefficient and decaying generation and

transmission infrastructures Most of the population lives in apartment blocks of poor quality, especially in terms of their thermal efficiency. or in single-family housing built from the late 19th century onwards, of varying quality and limited facilities, constructed in a time with no building codes and standards. There is no national definition of energy poverty, the phenomenon is poorly understood by practitioners, and little data is collected on this topic.

The city government in Context B is looking to carry out a home retrofitting programme to improve the energy efficiency of households, but has a limited budget and can only intervene where the need is greatest.

SCENARIO 3:

Context C is a large city of over 1 million inhabitants in the greater metropolitan area, and is a major industrial and transport hub. The urban area is made up of several sprawling suburban areas around a large city centre. Much of the city centre consists of multi-storey apartment blocks built post 1950 - often with few planning regulations - whereas the suburban areas are more diverse in terms of housing types, sizes and qualities.

There has been an expansion of the grey economy following austerity measures, which has been linked to the provision of non-regulated, informal energy services, particularly in the city suburbs where there is no gas network. Burning fuelwood in these areas is common. Due to the climate, energy is needed for cooling in summer and heating in winter. There are diverse minority religious and ethnic groups living in the city, and many social groups - including the middle classes - rely on lower-than-average incomes to support the household. Although there is no national definition of energy poverty, there is a definition for, and data is collected on vulnerable consumers, although understanding of the issue is low.

The city council is looking to set up a new solar energy community in areas where rates of fuelwood burning are highest to improve air quality and health outcomes.

Group Work Outputs:

SCENARIO 1:

What engagement strategies might you use to achieve the aim of the programme?

- Try to set up examples of cases that have worked in the past, which creates willingness for others to replicate, as people have seen it works, is beneficial and not a waste of their time.
- Stress the social dimension and value of the project, create a community event around energy, even if they're not so interested in energy, it can bring people together and start a discussion.
- Schools – run sessions where children do energy audits so they get familiar with energy topics early.

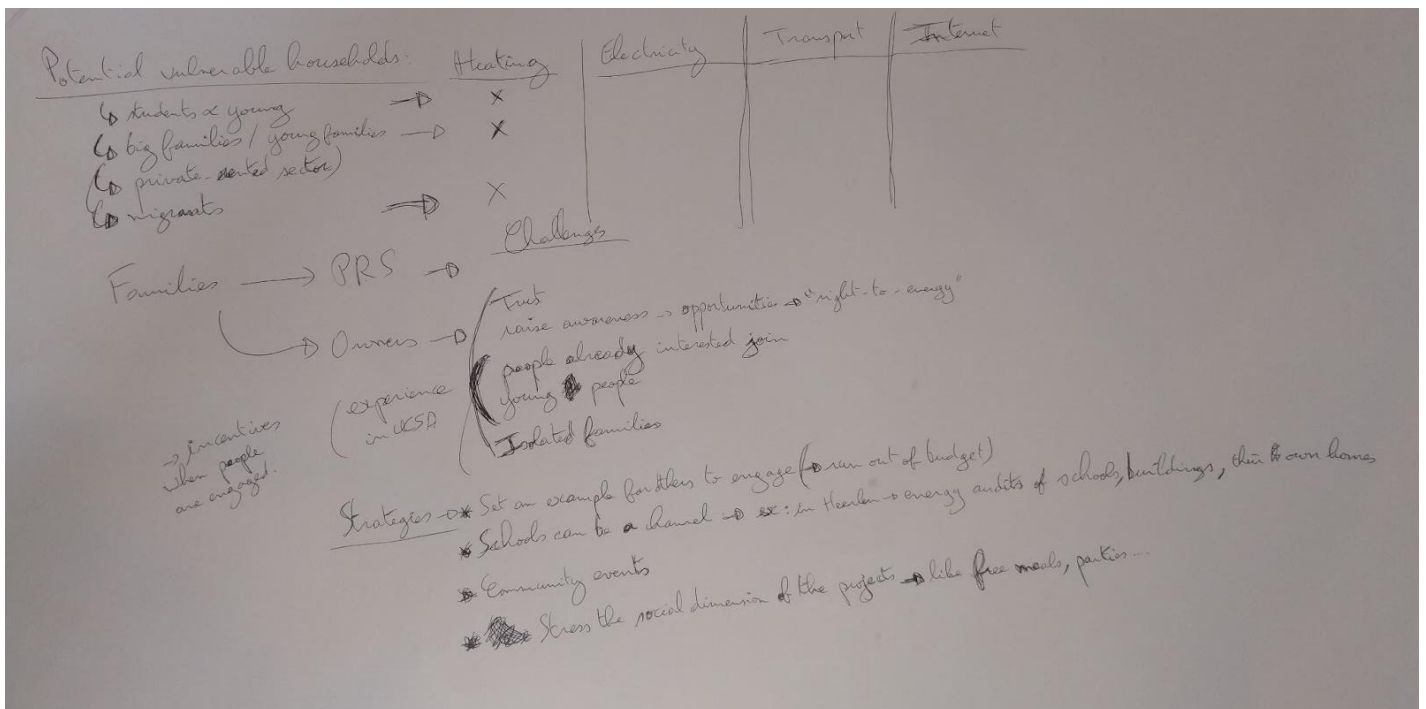


Figure 7 - Output from group work for Scenario 1 (Valencia, April 2022)

SCENARIO 2

What engagement strategies might you use to achieve the aim of the programme?

- Utilise a collective approach centred around the buildings (and thus communities), rather than individuals.
- Train ex-miners out of work to be energy ambassadors/advisers, to solve unemployment and also engagement issues.
- Remodel empty apartments as 'model' renovated apartments that people can visit with a focus on quality of living and efficiency to show people what they could have.
- Focus on renovations to make it a better place to live as well as for energy reasons: for example, an insulated condominium roof could become a roof terrace for all to enjoy.
- Identify key barriers: it can be stressful to renovate, so look at providing childcare, temporary accommodation, shower/toilet facilities to organise people's lives whilst the renovations are underway.

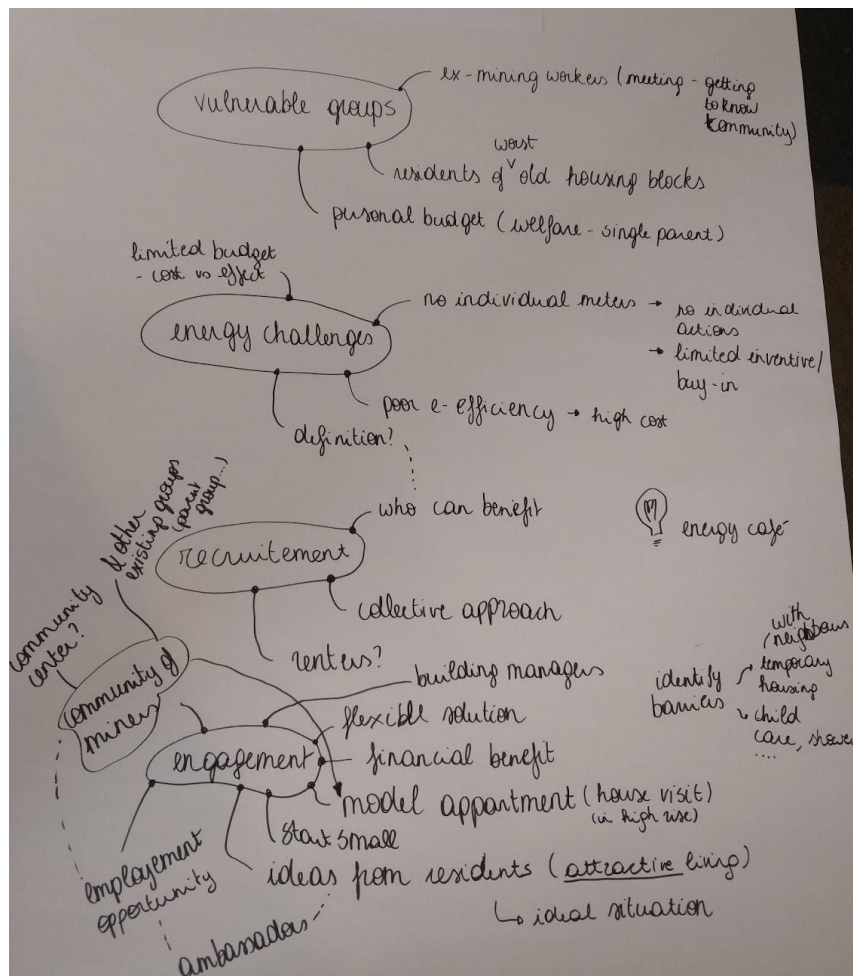


Figure 8 - Output from group work for Scenario 2 (Valencia, April 2022)

SCENARIO 3

What engagement strategies might you use to achieve the aim of the programme?

- Identify leaders from target communities to be 'early adopters' of the programme. Invite them (religious group, associations etc) to participatory workshops to understand their community needs and identify those who are most in need.
- Adapt language and cultural contexts to be inclusive.
- Create a small 'engine' group of 4-5 people who will bring others with them as they take the lead.
- Create trainings and a series of workshops to teach people on new initiatives to produce and consume energy.

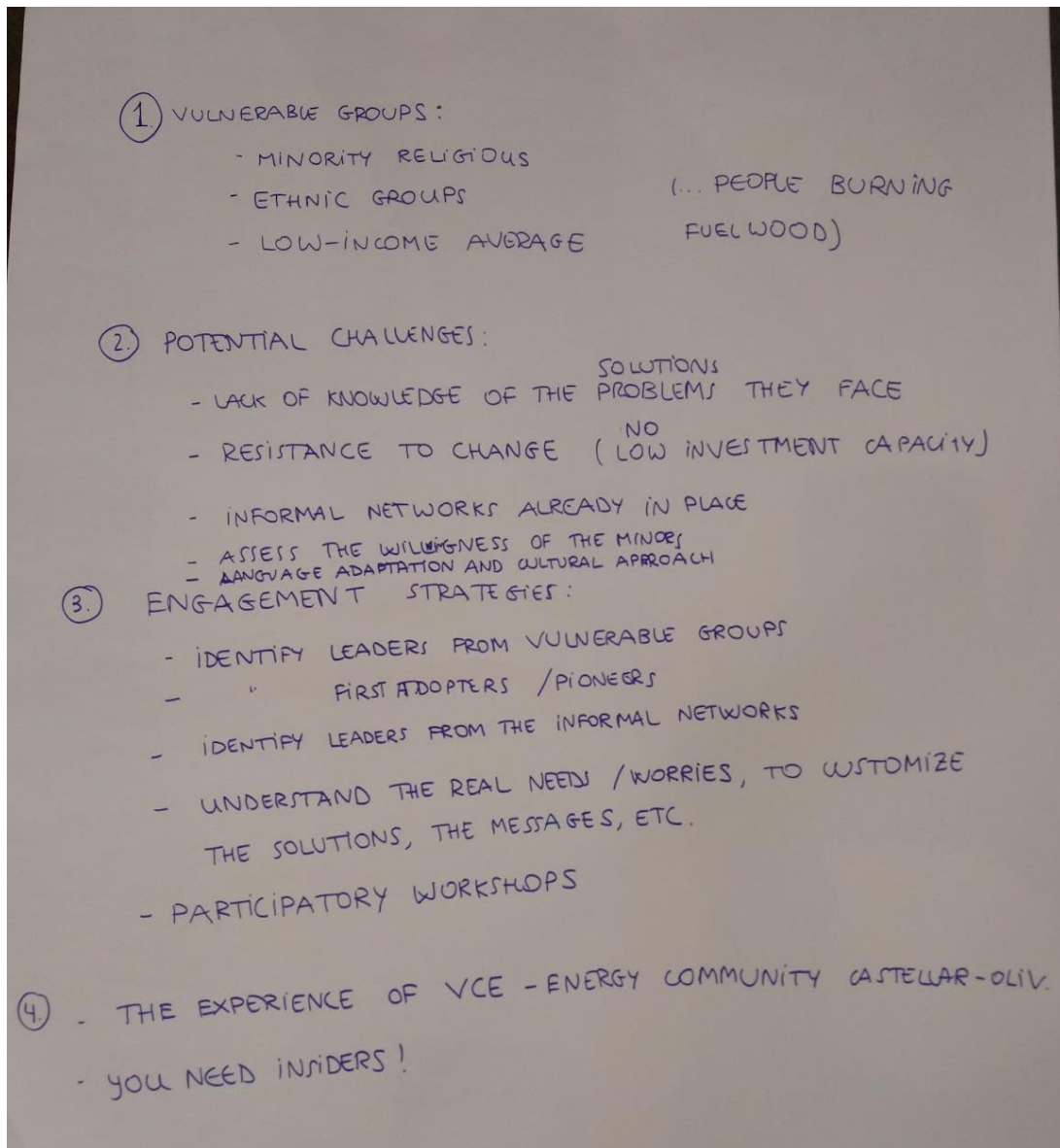


Figure 9 - Output from group work for Scenario 3 (Valencia, April 2022)

Annexe 2: Project Details and Further Information

[COMACT Project](#) (Community Tailored Actions for Energy Poverty Mitigation)

[Guidebook on the concept of energy poverty](#)

In order to produce this guidebook, the COMACT project surveyed a sample of 200 households in each of their pilot locations, pre-defining households considered at risk of energy poverty utilising socio-economic data from censuses, real-estate prices and technical parameters on building quality. From this survey, they derived key recommendations on the involvement of energy-poor communities in implementing energy-efficient renovations, around the concept of willingness to pay in multi-inhabitant buildings.

Willingness to pay for renovations is critical to the successful implementation of a project. Paying for works in instalments was more popular than paying a lump sum of money.

Age - younger respondents were more willing to financially contribute to renovation than their more elderly counterparts. Considerations for elderly people were lower incomes, spending longer at home and thus being disturbed by renovation works, long payback times meaning they might not see returns on investment.

Education - in the countries surveyed, education level did not seem to impact on willingness to pay for renovations or involvement in projects.

Community and management - findings suggested that the financial state of the community, as well as cohesion, is critical. Those with looser personal ties to their neighbours, or those with conflicts between residents, saw a lower willingness to pay and less engagement with renovation projects.

[EMPOWERMED Project](#)

The EMPOWERMED project focuses on empowering women to take action against energy poverty in the Mediterranean region. As well as the communication training module detailed below, the project also has training on health, improving wellbeing, gender and energy poverty education, which can be useful to share with session facilitators to increase their knowledge and familiarity with the specificities of energy poverty prior to workshops.

[Communication Training Module](#)

As part of the EMPOWERMED project, the Partners developed a training module on how to communicate with vulnerable households on the topic of energy poverty. This document covers several important aspects of successful communication, both verbal and written, and also includes a methodology of how to approach households affected by energy poverty.

The module includes **gender-sensitive and gender-specific advice on communication**, including ensuring awareness of different genders' access to and consumption of energy, ensuring that there is a **gender diverse representation of facilitators/consultants**, inviting women directly to participate, and **being aware of social norms or stereotypes**.

[REACH Project](#) (Reduce Energy Use And Change Habits)

[Guidelines for implementing focus groups](#)

As part of the REACH project, focus groups were carried out with stakeholders dealing with households with low incomes, who could provide feedback on the proposed household visits in the project's pilot areas.

An advised consideration when selecting expert stakeholders is to decide which ones will provide the most useful and relevant feedback to best support the activities foreseen. To attract participants, the **encouragement used to involve them must be relevant to the local situation, culture and circumstances**, but could include

The provision of information about project ideas and goals

The publicity, new connections, visibility and positive image that they may gain from participation

An explanation of the importance of both their participation and the project.

[Promotion Campaign Information](#)

N.Macedonia - in North Macedonia, three local organisations (a city social centre, an NGO working with people with disabilities and the Macedonian Red Cross) were enlisted as key actors for implementation, as well as teachers and students at a secondary school. Informational leaflets on energy poverty, and a brochure with information on household visits/programme application forms were disseminated via the channels and to the beneficiaries of the partner organisations. Packages of energy-saving devices were distributed to school students. The students, educated on energy issues through the programme, were then able to snowball the information to others in the community and boost applications to

relevant services for energy poverty reduction. This proved more effective than the brochure (95 applications vs 0).

Slovenia - in Slovenia, several channels were utilised to boost engagement in the REACH programme. Local and national media, social networks, presentation of the project at community events and snowballing via word-of-mouth, as well as project leaflets with a thermometer and hygrometer at social centres and local support points.

Outcomes from this pilot found that the most efficient method for informing households and obtaining applications for services was via municipal Centres for Social Work.

Croatia - the Croatian pilot also used several channels to reach households, including social welfare centres, local NGOs, city offices, and the encouragement of snowballing by households. They used the distribution of multiple helpful information guides and a thermometer/hygrometer to increase visibility. The pilot reported difficulty reaching the required number of household visits, but that the combination of sharing information via multiple channels proved effective.

Bulgaria - in Bulgaria, it was found that engagement with local churches proved effective for engaging households. Working with schools to increase energy engagement and education was also an important tool.

[STEP Project \(Solutions to Tackle Energy Poverty\)](#)

[Policy Recommendations](#)

The STEP Project produced policy recommendations for municipalities and the role of local actors in tackling energy poverty and engaging vulnerable households. They posit that municipalities are “ideally placed to help implement national programmes and to mobilise the comprehensive approach needed at a local level”, which could include backing community energy start-ups and energy schemes to benefit citizens. Municipalities are also able to join the dots between programmes that have similar objectives and reduce costs by facilitating economies of scale.

[Best practices on reaching vulnerable consumers](#)

The STEP project also provides a compilation of best practices on reaching energy poor consumers. These projects use the following methods

Utilisation of **existing community networks** and emphasis on outreach work

Simple and **easy referral** services

Strong communications channels between partners and stakeholders

Training for local outreach workers on how to deliver advice and practical support in an efficacious manner.

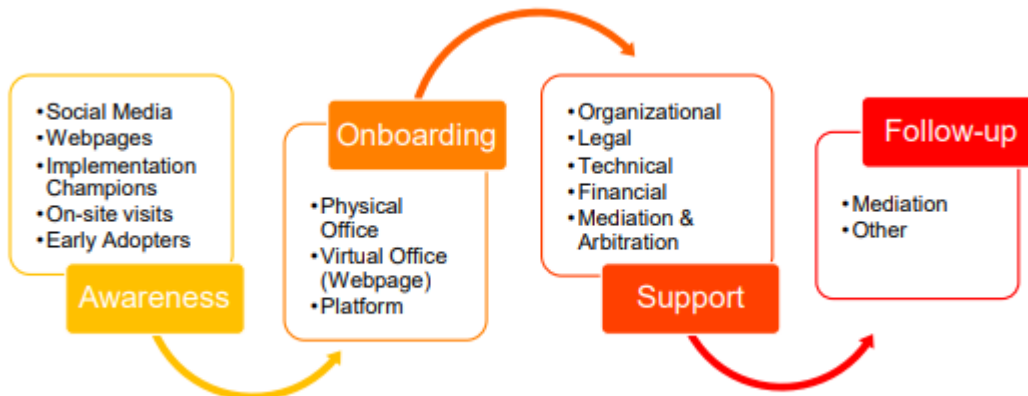
Having several meetings/house visits to build trust and increase likelihood of change being implemented.

In the case of the WHAM project, a caseworker is assigned to the main hospitals to identify and then support people who may be prevented from being discharged due to having a cold or damp home. This can help to identify vulnerable people who may otherwise not be referred to a service by other means.

[UPSTAIRS \(Uplifting Energy Communities\)](#)

[Report on Collective Community Engagement Strategies](#)

The UPSTAIRS project developed an engagement strategy targeted at creating One Stop Shops in their project’s pilot regions. The project developed the below schematic (Figure X), following the IAP2 model, to raise awareness, onboard participants, support and guide participants through the process, and then provide a follow-up service.



They designated roles and responsibilities for ensuring that engagement was sustained, including: **Communication staff** for maintaining a strong comms campaign from onboarding to implementation; **Technical staff** to provide support, advice and to coordinate with suppliers; and **Implementation Champions** with local knowledge, to provide support to individuals and groups to engage new users, anticipate conflicts and identify new possible target groups and activities.

Each of the pilots created a **key message** for their campaigns, which addressed the motivations of the different target groups for using the One Stop Shop service. For example, in Asenovgrad Municipality, Bulgaria, the following messages were used, focussing on economic and environmental motivations: Vulnerable people and people at risk of vulnerability: *"Get access to grants to lower your energy bills and improve your comfort level"*; and for Young people: *"The path towards sustainability and a greener lifestyle"*. In Brunenthal Municipality, Germany, the target groups were mostly higher-income, environmentally conscious communities, and thus the message was different: *"Learn how to access RE yourself, connect with your neighbours, and improve Brunenthal"*.

The project also identified key aspects to consider when continuation or replicability of the pilot action is desired in the long term. These included **Ease of Use** - designing an "intuitive and inclusive service" that does not exclude any groups due to a lack of knowledge - **Fostering Community Growth** - results highlight benefits beyond a transactional relationship - and **Maintaining and Caring for Loyal Users** - these people are the best advocates for the project and reach new users.

[WELLBASED Project](#)

[Report on Focus Groups](#)

Focus Groups carried out as part of the WELLBASED project were split into two parts; Exploration and Engagement. Both sections were conducted with the use of many images, which can reduce language barriers and also to increase familiarity and understanding of the topics covered. **The focus groups also commenced with sharing stories of people in similar situations, and asking participants to comment on how much they could relate to these stories.** This was considered to be key to overcoming uncomfortable or stigmatising feelings.

The exploration section aimed to obtain a detailed view on the problems that energy poor households face and what people struggled with the most in their daily lives. **Participants used stickers to select images showing experiences that energy poor households face to increase interactivity.** The engagement section allowed discussion on potential solutions that could improve their living situation and priorities, also using stickers and images.

[Alliance Against Energy Poverty \(APE\) - Catalonia](#)

The APE, initially set up in Barcelona, Spain, and now widespread across Catalonia, is a network of mutual aid energy support groups, run by both activists and those who have experienced energy poverty. **There is no formal leadership so that all feel able to share their knowledge and skills. Issues are collectively addressed, with people sharing solutions, support and ideas for overcoming the problem.** The groups function as a “transformative, self-support engagement methodology”, which as a result of being led by those with an understanding of what it is like to be in energy poverty, stigma and shame are removed (Ortiz et al., 2021). The organisation advocates for a good communication plan with clear messaging to spread awareness of their mission.

[Decide Madrid](#)

Decide Madrid is an e-participation platform which allows individuals, NGOs, public and private organisations to get involved in policy and decision-making processes in the Madrid Municipality. Functions include creating proposals, voting in consultations, regulations, and budgets, and participating in debates. **The portal increases transparency by making all data and information open access, and increases community empowerment, by allowing space for idea generation and inclusion** in the management of city improvement processes.

[Energy Checks - Groundworks Charity](#)

Groundworks are a UK national charity who specialise in providing expertise on simple and practical solutions to reduce energy consumption. Qualified surveyors, termed “Green Doctors” attend **local community events so that residents can meet the team and ask for advice, receive information and get free energy saving devices, using an interactive showcasing show-and-tell methodology.** They also provide talks to local authorities, health partners and frontline workers to increase awareness of energy poverty, help them make referrals to services and the best ways to support their clients with energy issues. The use of the name ‘Doctor’ helps to provide familiarity, reduce scepticism of experts or authorities as doctors are trusted figures in local communities, as well as helping to emphasise the health aspect of energy poverty.

[LEAP Project \(Local Energy Action Partnerships\)](#)

LEAP is a free service providing energy support, advice and onwards referrals for home visits or government schemes, to help people stay warm and reduce their bills. Utilising a **wide network of referral organisations** - including food banks, citizens advice points, health clinics or housing officers, with a **very broad set of criteria**, based on income, health or vulnerability, to capture as many people as possible who are at risk of energy poverty. It is **open to homeowners, private and social renters**. Applications can be made personally or on behalf of someone else, using a freephone number, email or online form.

[Research Institute for Disabled Customers](#)

This UK-based research institute conducted a survey into energy use, needs and experiences among people with disabilities, and evaluated the accessibility of energy price comparison websites. 75% of those surveyed use more energy due to their disability, and had higher energy bills as a result. The accessibility evaluation highlighted the importance of accessibility for people with visual, cognitive, dexterity and learning difficulties, and emphasised the need for **clear instructions, support for screen readers, readable text size, plain language and colour contrasts to support people with additional needs**. Having a telephone helpline or chat service was also deemed important.

[Speak Up - Prioritise Me Project](#)

Speak Up is a UK organisation, specialising in self-advocacy for people with disabilities, with one arm of the organisation promoting co-production of government and local authority work with disabled communities. The Prioritise Me project collaboratively developed a training resource to support people with learning disabilities to better understand the energy market and stay out of fuel poverty. These resources included short films and easy-read presentation guides on topics such as how to read energy meters, understanding bills, accessing services and tips on how to save energy in the home. **The easy-read guides use large images and diagrams, with simple language in large fonts to increase comprehension and retention of information.**



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