Engagement – it's not always easy!

There may be problems in working with communities at every stage, but there are usually approaches that can help you get through the difficulties.

Finding a way in...
- Allow the time to talk and build trust: don't rush to kick off
- Use lists of organisations to make contacts but use all possible ways (from on-line resources to notices in shop windows) to find local activists. Of someone can't (or doesn't want to) help ask if they know anyone who can.
- Be clear on why you're looking to engage but listen to their concerns and stories – find the linkages
- Have some ideas to offer but be ready to change them

Getting started
- Plan your launch with one or more existing local organisations - get the key people on board if you can.
- If you don't have a big project or are short of resources, consider launching your work by 'piggy-backing' on to an existing event
- Don't have a formal 'meeting' if that's not what will get your target audience involved – find some way to create an 'active launch' where people do things (e.g. draught-proof the room where the event is taking place!)
- Don't spend too long on a film or speakers – get people talking or acting
- Have materials ready to show what can be done if people get involved (if you can get someone form a similar project that's already working, that can be very helpful)
- Do the publicity absolutely as well as you can – this is when it really matters
- Know the answer to the question "what's in it for me?"
- Use social media to get the word around – ask local people what groups and nets they use

Keeping going
- Get local people involved in running the project as far as and as soon as possible
- Think: how can we get people involved in the decision-making?
- If the community isn't helping run the project, then set up some form of local advisory network
- Let people know what's happening – put out regular updates through suitable media
- Invest time in building people's skills and confidence
- Celebrate the successes
- Get people doing different things: arrange visits to similar projects

Finishing off
- Know well in advance what will happen at the end – have an 'exit strategy'
- Is there a way in which local action can continue: would training or a workshop help make that happen
- Discuss the end of your work openly with people - have a completion celebration event and use this as a chance to talk about the next steps if you've not done that already.

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