Engaging people at local levels

Localised initiatives are needed for change to be introduced effectively in all areas. Many South Australian Government organisations have large and geographically dispersed workforces across multiple metropolitan and regional sites, servicing diverse communities.

An action plan for local engagement can be a source of innovation by which each locality can find resourceful ways of implementing the change.

How to do it

Follow three simple steps to stimulate planning for local engagement and generate local ownership, support and innovation:

1. select actions
2. develop action plan
3. gain feedback and adjust.

1. Select actions

The range of actions depends on the extent of engagement and degree of effort considered necessary to ensure desired behaviours are embedded. Organisations usually focus on 2-3 actions and extend it to other areas if there is traction. Your project manager or local change coach can conduct the actions for smaller projects, while other resources may be needed for large change.

Building change into team meetings	Train teams in local change management and provide them with tools to apply the techniques at the local level.
	Training can be delivered using a train the trainer approach. The trainer then becomes the coach to ensure their team makes the effort to apply the techniques.
	Use a range of topics in the first training session related to key themes in the change program, such as being more client-centred, quality focused or more collaborative across the organisation. This should also focus on the public sector values and behaviours. The topics, success measures and timeframes are chosen by the team. Intangible and tangible incentives or rewards are sometimes provided to motivate teams.
Establishing small project teams	This often involves identifying and organising representatives from different teams or departments who have varied knowledge, skills and networks. The team can focus on a particular issue or area of change and a coach or trainer is often provided to assist.
Idea pool participation	An ideas pool can be an effective way of generating new ideas at a local level and to create excitement about the change agenda among individuals and teams. This can be a formal session held on a semi-regular basis or a forum on your

	organisation's intranet.
	Encourage individuals and teams to submit their ideas. These are evaluated by senior leaders and given appropriate funding and resources if selected. They can be undertaken either by the idea provider or the most appropriate part of the organisation.
Briefing and education sessions	Briefing and short training sessions are held in local areas on topics related to the change agenda. They are often conducted by change champions who have undertaken their own successful change initiatives.
	The session is based on a particular theme and the change champion is often teamed up with a facilitator to ensure the session is effectively conducted and the learning objectives are achieved. Teams or areas are then encouraged – or sometimes expected – to take on an initiative using the knowledge gathered in the session.
Culture change event sessions	As organisations undertake their change program, hundreds of ideas are identified, pursued and delivered. Some of these are particularly innovative and can be catalysts for others to apply them in their own areas.
	Those who achieve these great outcomes are often keen to share their ideas at culture change sessions, which are also a way of rewarding change champions. Events like these can be held in a local workplace and launched by the change sponsor. While it may be appropriate to reward or recognise those who achieved the results, it is mainly a networking and information sharing session. They can have themes such as *service improvement initiatives*, *performance improvement initiatives* or *values and behaviours initiatives*.
Newsletter or blog site	Newsletters or social media are also useful for sharing the success of change achievements and can help inspire other workplaces. They encourage individuals and teams to share their success across a wide geography.
Reward change champions with secondment opportunities	Offer change champions and role models the opportunity to display their skills and capabilities on change projects or in another area for fixed periods. Skill development, coaching and tools are provided and in some instances a set of change champions can form a team to work on a challenging change initiative.
Set up networks of change buddies	It can be hard to manage the change momentum across a large organisation once the initial training, education and briefings have finished. This can be addressed by encouraging change champions to remain linked by setting up 'change buddies'.
	These are peer relationships established through the initial training program or as part of other network activities. Change buddies do not have to be in the same location or part of the business. In fact, cross organisational relationships are strongly encouraged and assist in developing broader networks and greater collaboration.

Wherever possible, action planning activities should apply the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) technique to build on the organisation's strength and potential. Instead of focusing on problems and weaknesses, AI builds on elements that have enabled success in the past.

When people are asked about their successes they become much more enthusiastic and engaged. An AI therefore runs along the lines of:

- What important things are you doing well right now?
- What might a bold and desirable future look like?
- What will we do to create it?

Through inquiry and dialogue, people can shift their attention away from problem analysis and engage in far more positive and productive action planning sessions.

2. Develop action plan

Once you have selected 2-3 actions, use the action plan template to build the plan and keep it updated with higher level actions and milestones.

Templates to help with developing an action plan
Action plan for local engagement

3. Gain feedback and adjust

Seek feedback on which initiatives are working and those which need to be altered or stopped. It is common to use change readiness measures with groups trained in change management to identify their enthusiasm for initiatives within the organisation. This approach provides feedback to individuals and the organisation on areas that require the most attention.

Templates to help with gaining feedback and adjusting
Change readiness assessment

Adjust for scale

Type of change	Guidance on how to apply this process
Small: Improving and refining methods, policies and procedures which are not very different to the current ways of working	- For a small project planning local engagement can be a quick but important exercise.
Medium: Distinct modifications to strategies, structures and/or management processes	- For a medium project planning local engagement can be a quick but important exercise and include as much or as little information as the project manager requires.
Large: Substantial realignment, restructuring and transformation of all or part of the organisation	- As per medium plus: - Tangible and intangible incentives can be used to encourage individuals and teams to raise awareness of their local area successes for possible adoption in other areas. - It is important to take a co-ordinating role at the organisational level to ensure that momentum is maintained and best practices are shared across the organisation.

Success measures

Success measures evident once change processes and activities are embedded in the organisation at the local level include:

- employee engagement – this can be assessed using a staff survey
- project outcomes – successfully completed projects and activities
- ideas program – innovative ideas delivering positive outcomes and improvements
- performance outcomes – these can include citizen satisfaction, lower costs, reduced operational risk, etc.

These measures can be presented on a dashboard or scorecard listing change improvements.