

Speakout

(Version 2)

Engagement range	Inform/Consult
Difficulty level	Easy
Cost	Low (up to \$1,000)
When might you use it	To develop community capacity To communicate an issue To develop an action plan To build alliances, consensus
Number of people required to help to organise	One - three people
Time to organise	Short (up to six weeks), Medium (six weeks to six months)
Size of audience	Large (over 30)
Issues/resources to think about	Venue (e.g. library, hall, tent, sheltered outside place; Staffing; Furniture Props for working in groups (pens, paper, pins)
Innovation level	Low to Medium

Description

This Speakout variation was designed by Wendy Sarkission to ensure that “all the voices are heard”. In this version, the main emphasis is on establishing an environment in which individuals feel comfortable and able to give their views on a range of topics. All community members are invited to attend the nominated venue and give their view on the selected topics. Their input is documented and later collated and circulated. It is a productive and useful alternative to a public meeting in which only a few people are given the opportunity to actually speak, the majority there only to listen. They are particularly useful where there are a number of sub-topics around a main theme or issue affecting a wide number of stakeholders.

The two major elements are:

- A ‘listener’ and a ‘scribe’ is allocated for each sub-topic.
- The venue is open over a period of time or series of times (such as a weekend and some evenings).

Whilst there might be information made available about the theme for the event, the main purpose is to hear what stakeholders views are about the sub-topics. They are not a mechanism for trying to convince stakeholders of a particular viewpoint.

Objective

- To make comment on a topic in a safe and friendly environment.

Desired Outcome

- Organisers get to hear a wide variety of views around a number of topics or subtopics of an issue, while members of the community get to be heard.

Uses/Strengths

- Use instead of a public meeting.
- Great for getting people's input.
- Good to demonstrate that people have been listened to.

Special Considerations/Weaknesses

- Needs 'facilitators' as the listeners and scribes, not specialists on the topic.
- Best if another person is available to type up topics 'on the go' rather than waiting to the end of the session.
- Credibility can be compromised by people wanting to use the event to promote a particular point of view. These can be organisers as well as associated special interest groups wanting to 'set up a stall'. This is not the place unless carefully structured.

Step by Step Guide

1. The organisers identify a number of 'hot' issues or topics that they would like members of the community to consider and have input into.
2. A suitable location like a hall, library or other accessible public place rented for short time (one to two days).
3. A table and flip chart is provided for each topic, together with a 'listener' and a 'scribe'. This is most important, and comprises the largest organisational part of the project.
4. The event is advertised, and members of the public invited to attend at their convenience over allocated time.
5. Community members go to each topic table that interests them, the listener 'actively listens' to what they have to say, with the scribe writing it down on the flip chart. No attempt is made to enter into a dialogue around the topic, the role of the listener being to ensure that the participant remains 'on topic', and expresses their view for the scribe to write it down.
6. At the end of the time period, the comments collected from all participants are 'themed' by the organisers, and the results distributed.