



Module 6 (Part 3)

Inclusive Community Engagement for SMEs

Part 3: Ensuring Inclusive Engagement through Shared Value and Community Empowerment.



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Discover the DARE Modules Learning Pathway:

Enjoy our learning blocks designed to help SMEs build diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces. Unlock the power of how DEI to drive the sustainable success of your company. Our practical and interactive Modules deliver real life insights and case studies from a European perspective – Join us in creating workplaces and communities where everyone can thrive!



MODULE 1

Introduction: Diversities Reviving European Enterprises

Key Features: Overview and definitions of D&I in SMEs. 12 Dimensions of Diversity. Learning key competencies for business case delivery.

- Part 1:** Why D&I Matters for SMEs.
- Part 2:** Building D&I Competencies for SMEs.



MODULE 2

Inclusive Leadership Skills

Key Features: Develop inclusive leadership skills (e.g., Bias awareness and mitigation). Tap into the power of neurodiversity. Measure impact and build resilience.

- Part 1:** Prepare for Inclusive Change Through Leadership.
- Part 2:** Unlock Inclusive Leadership & Neurodiversity.
- Part 3:** Measure Leadership Impact & Build Resilience.



MODULE 3

Inclusive Talent Management for SMEs

Key Features: Inclusive advertising, recruitment and retention. Performance management and leadership succession planning.

- Part 1:** Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Diverse Talent.
- Part 2:** Creating Inclusive Job Descriptions & Adverts.
- Part 3:** Inclusive Selection, Interviewing, and Offer Strategies.
- Part 4:** Employee Talent Development and Retention.
- Part 5:** Performance Management and Feedback.
- Part 6:** Succession Planning and Leadership Development.



MODULE 6

Inclusive Community Engagement for SMEs

Key Features: Learn the six core principles of inclusive community engagement. Understand the four layers to community context and prepare an effective Engagement Framework and Action Plan.

- Part 1:** Foundations of Inclusive Community Engagement.
- Part 2:** Understand & Engage Your Community.
- Part 3:** Ensuring Inclusive Engagement through Shared Value.
- Part 4:** Prepare for an Effective Community Engagement Framework.
- Part 5:** Create a Community Engagement Framework & Action Plan.



MODULE 5

Inclusive Marketing For SMEs

Key Features: Embed inclusivity into branding. Understand the needs of diverse audiences. Craft strategic inclusive marketing campaigns.

- Part 1:** The Power of Inclusive Marketing for SME Brands.
- Part 2:** Understand Your Customers and Overcome Marketing Barriers.
- Part 3:** Crafting Inclusive Marketing Campaigns.



MODULE 4

Building an Inclusive Company Culture in SMEs

Key Features: Build an inclusive company culture. Design and deliver a strategic cultural change audit, review policies and practices and empower teams through reward and recognition.

- Part 1:** Understand and Build an Inclusive Company Culture.
- Part 2:** Design and Deliver a Strategic Cultural Change Audit.
- Part 3:** Support Management in Creating a Workplace of Belonging.
- Part 4:** From Policies to Practice: Cultivating a Culture of Inclusion.
- Part 5:** Empower Teams Through DEI Collaboration, ERGs, and Recognition.



Introduction DARE to Module 6

Inclusive Community Engagement for SMEs

This module is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of inclusive community engagement ensuring that every voice is heard and respected.

Part 1: Explore the Principles: Shared Values, Representation, Accessibility, Transparency, Respect, and Empowerment.

Part 2: Identify diverse community layers—residents, culture, sectors, and resources. Develop strategies encourage participation, and build community pride.

Part 3: Create shared value by integrating diverse perspectives, mobilizing collective action.

Part 4: Build engagement teams, refine strategies, and facilitate inclusive conversations that ensure all voices are heard.

Part 5: Learn to design a sustainable Community Engagement Framework with clear objectives, stakeholder involvement, and measurable outcomes, ensuring long-term impact and adaptability.

Section 1

Foundations of Inclusive Community Engagement: Principles, Practices, and Benefits.

Part 1

Section 2

Understand & Engage Your Community: Foundations for Inclusive Impact.

Part 2



Section 3

Ensuring Inclusive Engagement through Shared Value and Community Empowerment.

Part 3

Section 4

Prepare for an Effective Community Engagement Framework: Step-by-Step Guide.

Part 4

Section 5

Create a Community Engagement Framework & Develop a Collaborative Action Plan

Part 5

M6:Part 3

Dig Deeper: Creating Shared Value. Learn how to enable long lasting shared value, incorporate diverse perspectives, mobilise for collective action and empower local champions.

Dig Deeper: Effective Inclusive Engagement. Learn about using active listening and representation to ensure everyone is heard and understood. Learn how to be open and honest with communication and collaborate to share, learn and grow together.

Dig Deeper: Empowering Inclusive Communities. Learn about participatory engagement and involving communities in decision making. Learn about capacity building, economic and social empowerment, advocacy and infrastructure support measures.

01

Dig Deeper: Creating Shared Value

02

Dig Deeper: Effective Inclusive Engagement

03

Dig Deeper: Empowering Communities

Case Study: Frazer Bakery, Finland
(Diverse Perspectives)

Case Study: Mavi Jeans, Turkey (Mobilisation)

Case Study: Hand in Hand, Sweden
(Participatory Planning)

Case Study: Doolin Hotel, Ireland
(Empowering Communities)

Case Study: Tico Mail, Ireland (SDG Implementation)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- **Understand the Principles of Shared Value** – Explain how businesses can create long-lasting value by integrating community needs and diverse perspectives.
- **Apply Effective Inclusive Engagement Techniques** – Utilize active listening, representation, and transparent communication to build meaningful collaboration.
- **Empower Local Champions & Mobilise Action** – Identify strategies to support community leaders, encourage collective action, and drive sustainable impact.
- **Facilitate Participatory Decision-Making** – Implement methods that involve community members in shaping initiatives that affect them.
- **Promote Economic & Social Empowerment** – recognise the role of advocacy, capacity building, and infrastructure support in strengthening communities.

Dig Deeper

Create Shared Value



Aim to Create Shared Value

Companies must take the lead and bring business and society back together. The solution lies in the principle of shared value, which involves creating economic value in a way that also creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges. . . . Shared value is not social responsibility, philanthropy, or even sustainability, but a new way to achieve economic success.

Harvard Business Review



Definition and Concept How to Create Lasting Shared Value

The purpose and need for SME community engagement by SMEs helps build trust, enhance brand reputation, and create shared value. It is essential for SMEs to actively engage with their communities to ensure long-term business sustainability and address regional challenges.

Unlike large corporations, SMEs are deeply rooted in their local economies, making their involvement crucial for economic resilience and social cohesion. Furthermore, such engagement helps SMEs align with European Union priorities on social responsibility, such as reducing inequality and promoting inclusive growth, enabling them to contribute to wider sustainability goals while securing their local relevance.



Definition and Concept How to Create Lasting Shared Value

"Create shared value" refers to a business concept where companies aim to generate economic value in a way that also creates value for society. It involves creating a win-win scenario where businesses can profit while simultaneously addressing societal challenges, such as environmental sustainability, community development, or public health.

This concept goes beyond traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) by integrating social and environmental concerns directly into the company's core business strategy. It encourages companies to identify business opportunities that contribute positively to society and the environment, while achieving financial success.

For example, a company might create shared value by designing products that are environmentally friendly, supporting local communities through job creation or education programs, or collaborating on initiatives that address pressing societal needs.

In essence, the idea of creating shared value is to align business objectives with broader social and environmental goals, sustaining long-term benefits for both businesses and society.

Definition and Concept How to Create Lasting Shared Value

Through an ongoing, inclusive engagement process, you should not only contribute to the development and well-being of the communities you serve but also **create lasting shared value** that benefits everyone involved. The journey of collaboration, empowerment, and shared success is what should drive you forward, and you should remain committed to improving and refining this process as you continue to grow and evolve as a 'new community' An ongoing, people-centred, community-building engagement process will yield lasting benefits. It helps strengthen and expand the base of support for community development activities.

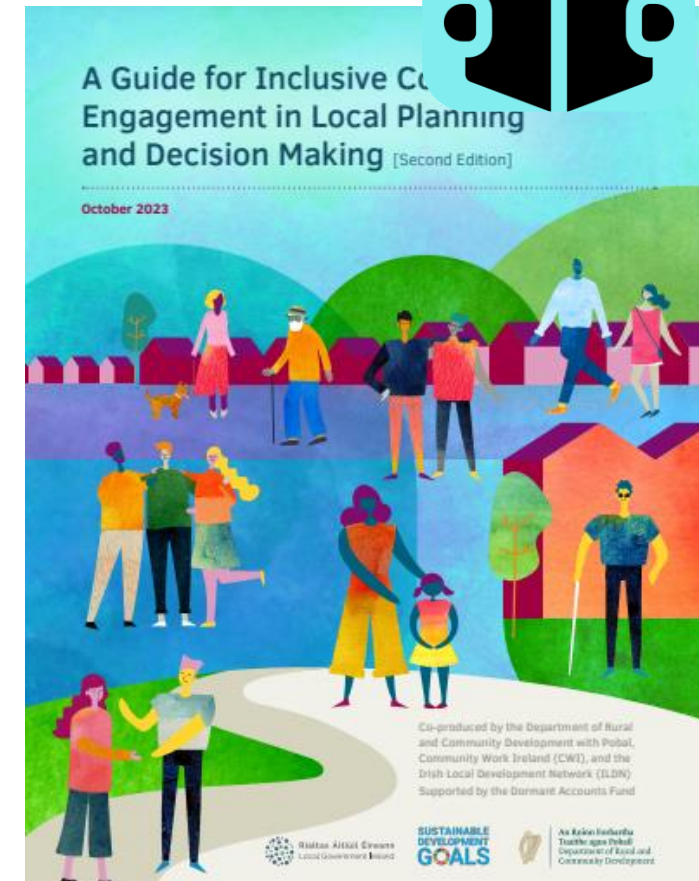
Your engagement should be a people-centred, community-building process that is key to creating lasting, shared value. By actively engaging with the communities you serve, you should not only contribute to their needs but also strengthen and expand the support base for your initiatives. This engagement helps mobilise individuals, creating a ripple effect of awareness and action that drives shared success for both you and your communities.

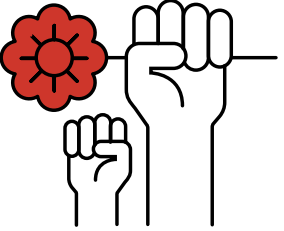
01

Create Shared Value: Incorporate Diverse Perspectives

Incorporate Diverse Perspectives: Your goal should be to engage and listen to a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints to better ensure that concerns or gaps are addressed in the planning process. By engaging a wide range of community members, you can listen to and gain valuable insights and varied viewpoints, solutions and perspectives. This will help shape your ideas or initiatives to be more relevant, inclusive, and effective. This approach ensures that every voice is heard and that your efforts will reflect the true needs and aspirations of the community, leading to stronger, more impactful shared value outcomes.

Resource



Shared Value	What to Do	How?	What Not to Do	Example
 <p>Incorporate Diverse Perspectives</p>	<p>Actively seek out and value different viewpoints. Use these insights to address gaps and refine your initiatives.</p> <p>Consider families, single people, children</p>	<p>Organize brainstorming sessions and listening forums where all community members can contribute ideas.</p>	<p>Avoid dismissing feedback from smaller or less influential groups. Don't impose external solutions without considering local input.</p>	<p>In Germany, <u>Bio-Lebensmittel Manufaktur</u> engages local farmers, environmentalists, and consumers to shape its sustainable organic food initiatives. They collaborate closely with regional farmers to source high-quality, organic foods. They regularly ask to connect and participate in various venues to assist with their sustainability efforts.</p>

Case Study

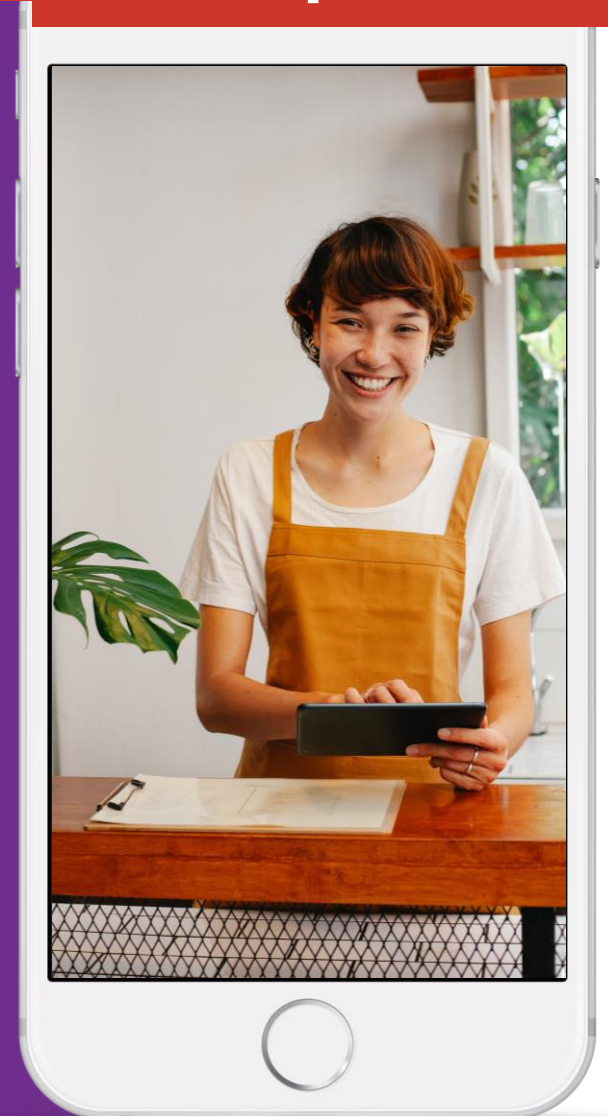
Diverse Perspectives

Fazer Bakery (Finland)

Campaign: “Let’s reduce food loss”

Fazer engages with local communities through programs that address food security and waste reduction. They partner with community companies to donate surplus food and organize workshops on sustainable food practices. Their engagement strategy prioritizes inclusion by working with vulnerable groups, including refugees and low-income families. They introduced a campaign to reduce food waste in craft bakeries in stores that involves people buying three bakery products baked the day before. The campaign, which includes a “Let’s reduce food loss” - bag, is active in the mornings and for only € 3 it is very affordable. They also donate this surplus of food to charities that ensure it is used as it should be used. Namely, to feed the hungry and give moments of joy to every day.

<https://www.fazergroup.com/sustainability/climate-and-circularity/circularity-and-food-loss/food-loss-and-waste-upcycling/>



Create Shared Value: Mobilise the Community

Mobilise the Community: Through inclusive engagement, you mobilise more people by ensuring they are informed, activated, and motivated to participate. This process not only broadens the base of support but also enables greater diversity in participation, which is key to creating meaningful, community-driven initiatives. As more people get involved, the collective impact grows, leading to stronger, more sustainable outcomes that benefit the entire community. By engaging and empowering a wide range of voices, we create lasting shared value that drives progress and enables a sense of ownership among all stakeholders.

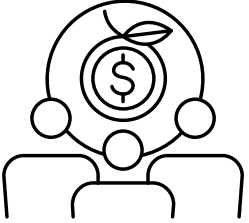
Resource



Strategies for Effective Community Mobilisation

- ❖ Identify and engage key stakeholders
- ❖ Develop a clear and compelling message and objective
- ❖ Build relationships and trust
- ❖ Empower community members
- ❖ Evaluate and adjust strategies

Create Shared Value: Mobilise the Community

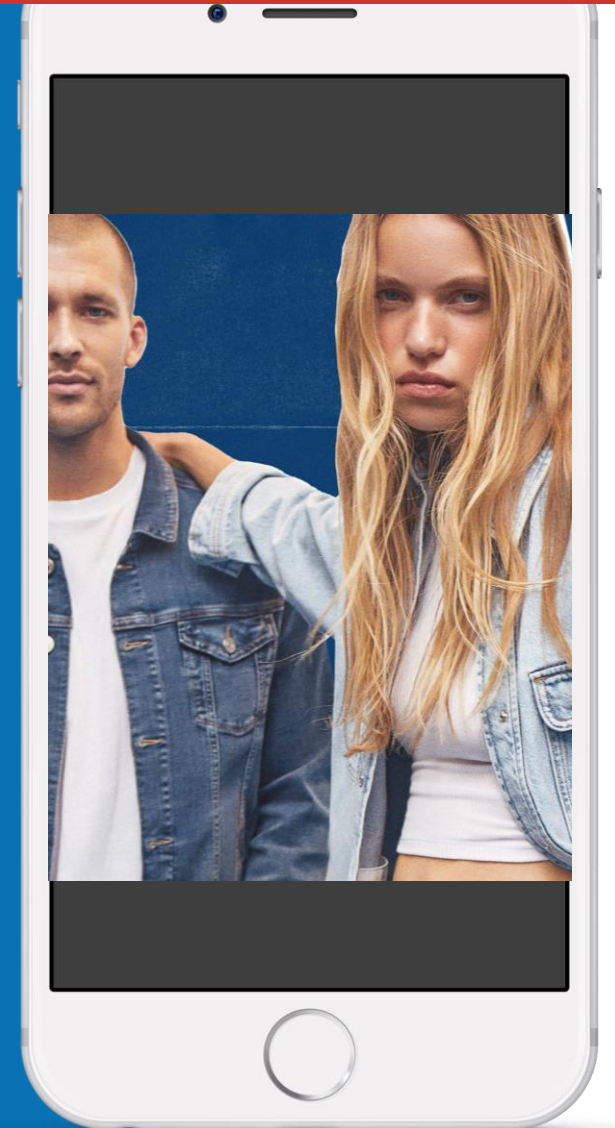
Shared Value	What to Do	How?	What Not to Do	Example
 Mobilise Communities	Ensure that engagement efforts are inclusive, reaching diverse community members. Create opportunities for everyone to participate, from youth, people with disabilities, elders to refugees.	Use accessible communication channels like social media, public events, and local radio. Ensure meetings are held at convenient times and locations.	Don't rely solely on digital communication if access is limited. Avoid tokenism, where participation is symbolic rather than substantive.	The <u>Italian SME Ecomuseo delle Acque del Gemonese</u> mobilized local communities by hosting inclusive workshops to protect water resources and promote eco-tourism.

Mavi Jeans (Turkey)

Campaign: 'All Blue'

MAVI works passionately to develop the best and most innovative jeans in the world while focusing on quality for sustainable growth. Fueled by respect for people, a passion for innovation, and a focus on data-driven efficiencies in production and distribution, Mavi is synonymous with quality.

As part of its "All Blue" CSR strategy, Mavi Jeans works with local artisans and communities to support sustainable production practices. The company collaborates with women-led cooperatives to promote traditional textile techniques, providing employment opportunities and preserving cultural heritage.



<https://eu.mavi.com/pages/about-us>

03

Create Shared Value: Empower Community Champions

Empower Community Champions.

Engagement creates and empowers connections between SMEs and the community, this creates a foundation for shared values where both the business and community thrive. Through active collaboration, you should aim to enhance visibility, build credibility, and ensure accountability, making sure that the solutions you implement are owned by those they impact. **For example**, in the engagement process, create opportunities for community members to step up as leaders and advocates for our projects. This strengthens the sense of partnership and ownership and lays the groundwork for the long-term sustainability of your initiatives. The more champions there are for a plan or an idea, the more likely it is to become a reality.

Resource



Learn How To Create Empowered Community Champions

- ❖ Identify your champions
- ❖ Develop a championing program
- ❖ Use a Champion Program Canvas

- ❖ Learn how to engage with communities so everyone benefits creating, greater resilience, stronger trust, productive partnerships, repeat business and develop community infrastructure and services.

Create Shared Value: Empower Community Champions

Shared Value	What to Do	How?	What Not to Do	Example
 Empower Community Champions	Identify and develop leaders within the community who can advocate for your shared goals.	Provide leadership training, mentorship opportunities, and resources to enable these community champions to lead.	Don't centralise leadership roles within your company. Avoid neglecting grassroots advocacy.	The <u>Danish initiative Byhaven 2200</u> , an urban gardening project, empowers local residents to take ownership of green spaces, enabling environmental stewardship.

Participatory Planning:

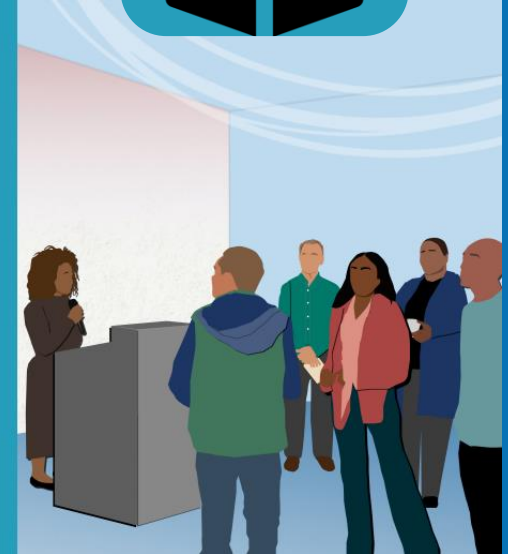
Most importantly, participatory planning enhances the substance and impact of your SME initiatives. It requires responding to present-day needs and priorities while incorporating a valuable range of perspectives and expertise. When an effort has been supported by community engagement, this means they have a permanent seat at the table, it helps the people it affects raise their voices to influence outcomes and will more accurately reflect their ideas, needs, and priorities. This approach ensures that efforts are responsive to present-day challenges while incorporating a wide range of perspectives and expertise. By actively involving the people affected, participatory planning creates initiatives that are more relevant, inclusive, and effective, enabling a sense of shared ownership and long-term commitment.

Resource



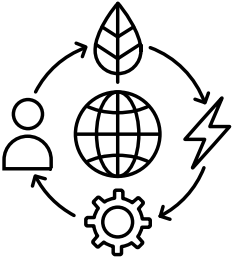
Community Engagement Toolkit

Building Purpose and Participation



The **Community Engagement Toolkit** is a comprehensive guide designed to help companies effectively engage with their communities in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of development projects.

Create Lasting Shared Value: Participatory Planning

Shared Value	What to Do	How?	What Not to Do	Example
 <p>Participatory Planning</p>	<p>Ensure that the community has a voice in planning and decision-making. Incorporate their needs and ideas.</p>	<p>Create steering committees or advisory boards with diverse community representation.</p>	<p>Don't finalize plans without consulting the community. Avoid rigid frameworks that don't allow for feedback.</p>	<p>In France, the <u>Cité des Paysages</u> eco-tourism project involves local residents in planning sustainable tourism activities, ensuring that initiatives align with their vision.</p>

Case Study

Hand in Hand, Sweden works with SMEs to promote gender equality and economic empowerment and entrepreneurship among marginalised communities, particularly women in rural areas. Their programs strive to build strong equal communities where women can influence the distribution of resources and power structures, in the household and at community level.

They offer training and microloans to women in developing countries to start and grow small businesses, helping them break the cycle of poverty and providing them with the tools to improve their economic standing.

Participatory Planning



HAND IN HAND
SWEDEN



<https://www.handinhandsweden.se/en/>

05

Pride of Community and Place:

Your engagement efforts should be designed to help nurture and reinforce a strong connection between the community, their place, and their sense of identity. By working together on shared initiatives, people experience a collective energy, commitment, and purpose that strengthens their bond with the community. This connection brings a deep sense of pride and belonging, making involvement in your projects both rewarding and exciting, building your reputation and valuing your role. As communities witness the potential for positive change and progress, their engagement becomes a powerful motivator, this creates lasting impact and a shared vision for a sustainable future. Community collaboration builds this shared value, increasing visibility, credibility, buy-in, accountability, and ownership of the solutions and ideas that emerge.

Resource



Learn About Community and Belonging

Learn how belonging enables trust and collaboration. Empathy is essential for a true sense of belonging and the role of leaders.

Think Kit: Pride in Place

- ❖ Learn how to research, plan and prepare for pride in place.
- ❖ Learn place-based approaches and best practices for understanding, reflecting and evaluating.

Create Shared Value: Pride of Community and Place

Shared Value	What to Do	How?	What Not to Do	Example
 Pride of Community and Place	Design initiatives that strengthen community identity and pride. Celebrate achievements collectively.	Organize community events, share success stories through local media, and highlight cultural heritage in your projects.	Avoid overlooking the cultural and historical significance of the place. Don't focus solely on short-term outcomes.	In the Netherlands, Van Gogh National Park connects local communities with their cultural and natural heritage, creating pride and identity through collaboration.

Case Study

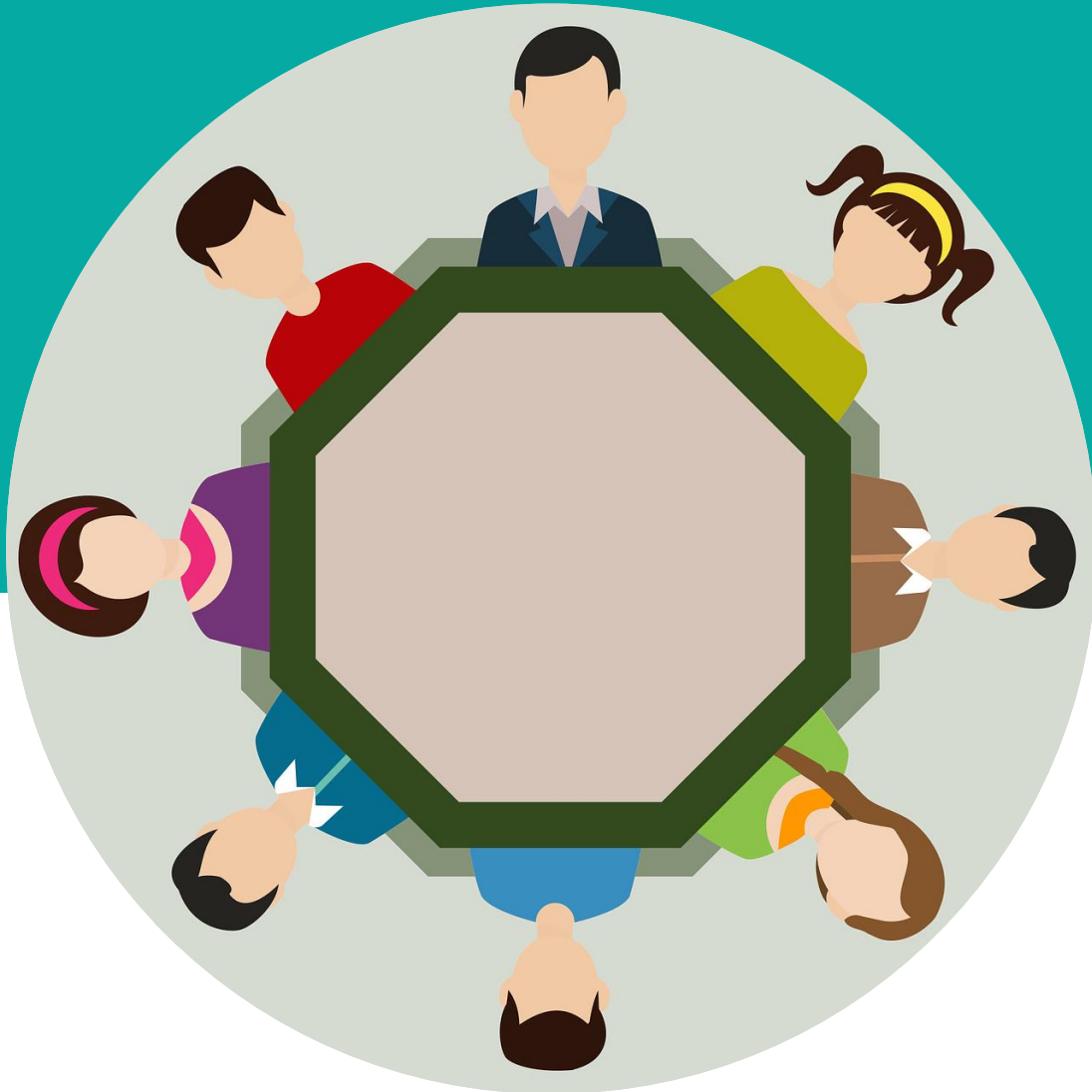
Instilling Pride for Community & Place

Chocolaterie Bonnat (France)

Chocolaterie Bonnat is a family-owned chocolate SME committed to promoting social inclusion in the cocoa-producing regions it works with, particularly in West Africa. The company works closely with cocoa farmers, ensuring they are paid fairly for their work and promoting sustainable farming practices. It invests in community development projects, such as educational programs for children, clean water access, and healthcare initiatives. By providing better wages and support to cocoa farmers, Bonnat ensures the sustainability of its supply chain and instills belonging and pride in the communities it relies on. This has created long-term partnerships, built solid trust, and strengthened the local economies of the communities, ensuring community well-being and pride in place.

Link: [Chocolaterie Bonnat](#)





Dig Deeper

Effective Inclusive Engagement

"Engagement is not about what you do to the community, but what you do with the community. Genuine involvement leads to shared success." (Source)

Approach

Effective Inclusive Engagement

"Effective Engagement" refers to a strategic and meaningful interaction between SMEs and the communities and companies they aim to connect with. It ensures that relationships are built on trust, mutual respect, and shared objectives. It is the foundation to all community engagement approaches.

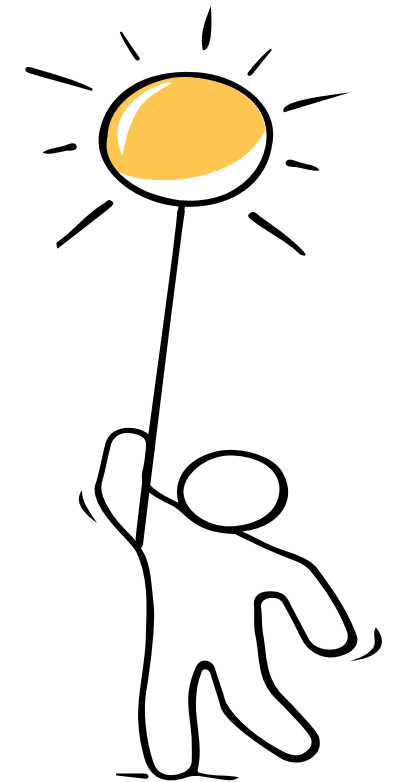


Effective Inclusive Community Engagement

Inclusive SME community engagement is not just about interaction for exchange or a one-off conversation; it's about achieving meaningful and lasting results. To do this it needs Effective Engagement Approaches. Effective engagement often involves using diverse approaches to ensure that efforts are inclusive, effective, and meaningful.

Effective community engagement can bring many benefits, such as increased support for a project, identification of collaboration opportunities within the community, building connections, and much more.

We define engagement as: *'a mutually beneficial interaction that results in participants feeling valued for their unique contribution'*

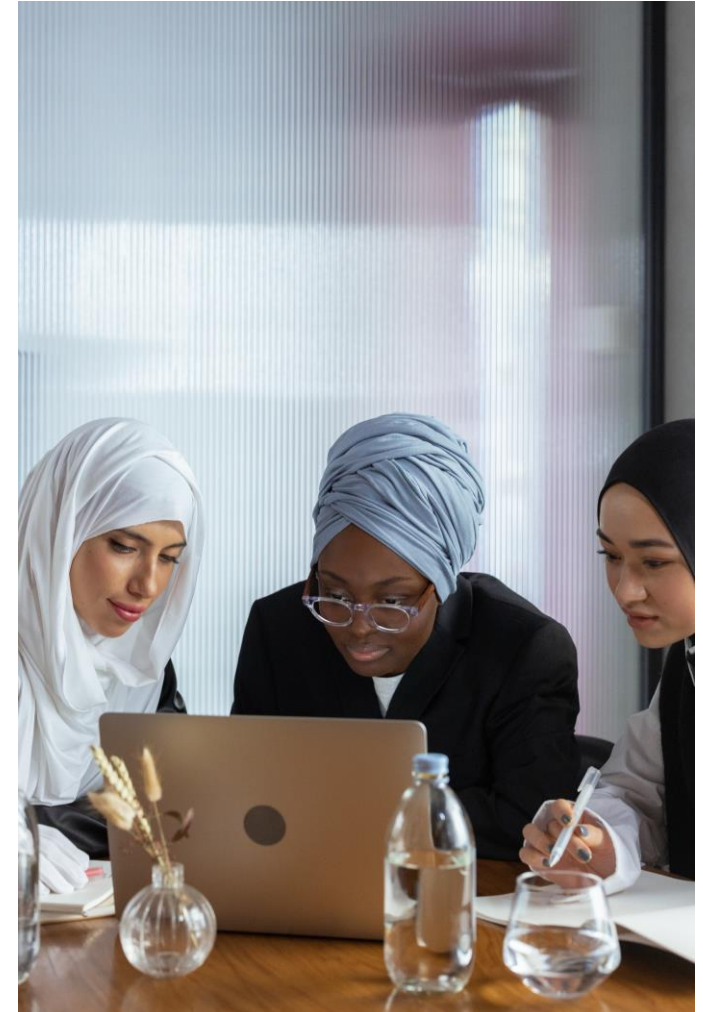


Effective Inclusive Engagement Versus Involvement

What about Involvement? Involvement implies many of the qualities of an interaction that we include in our definition of engagement. The problem with “involvement” is that it is also used to describe a variety of one-way communication processes like surveys, newsletters and “talking head” info sessions.

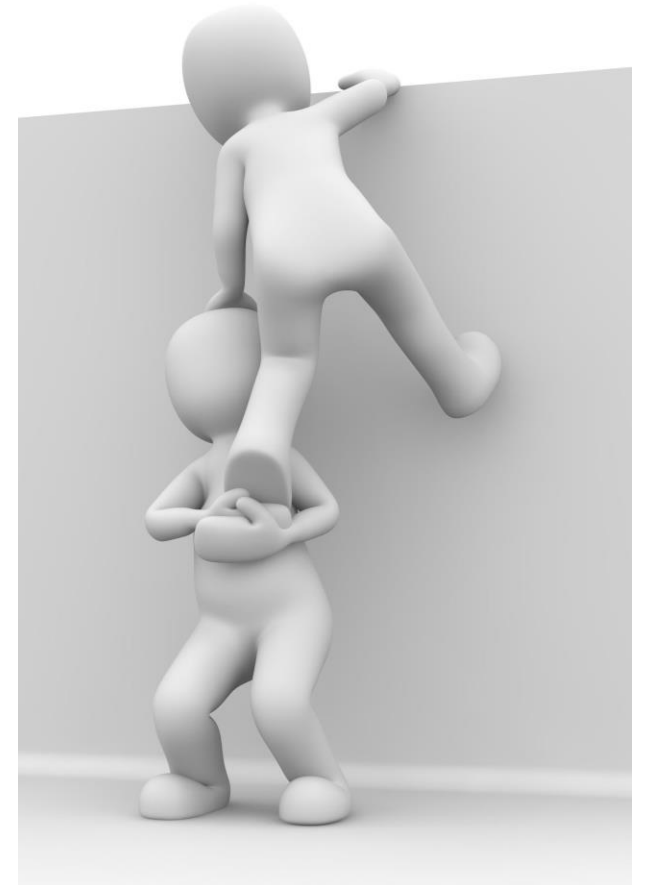
The Difference? So, the distinction between engagement and involvement seems to be grounded in the act of reciprocity or mutual benefit.

Effective engagement...where the person ‘effectively engaged’ is an integral and essential part of a process, brought into the act because of care and commitment.



Importance of Effective Engagement for SMEs and Communities

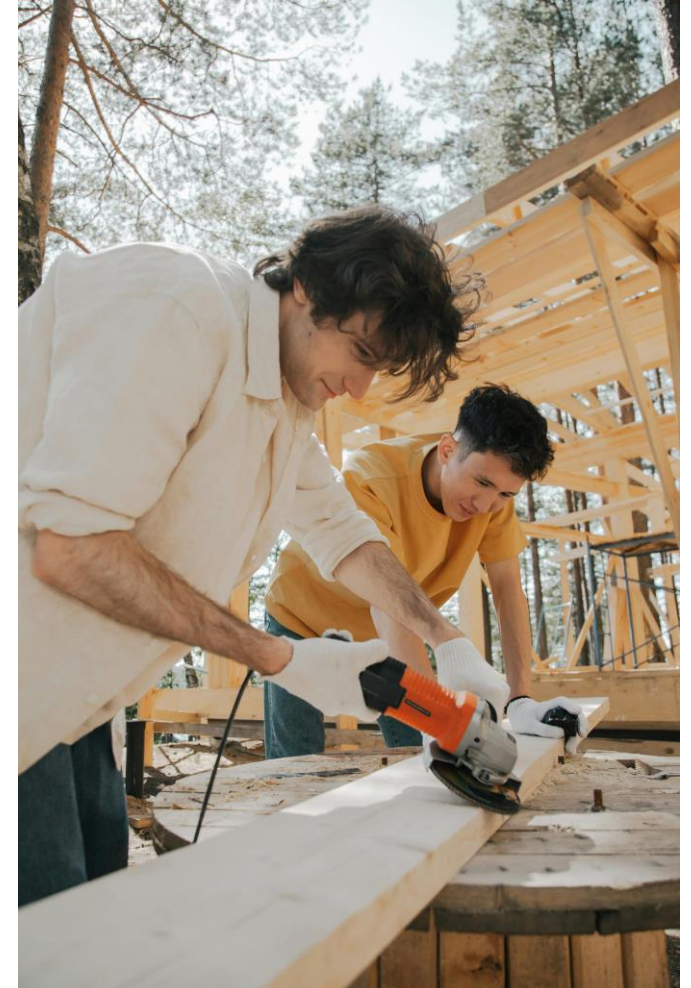
- 1. Builds Trust:** SMEs that genuinely listen to and act on community feedback builds and strengthens trust, which is the foundation for long-term relationships.
- 2. Promotes Shared Value:** Collaboration ensures that both the SME and the community benefit, creating outcomes that are sustainable and impactful.
- 3. Enhances Resilience:** Engagement enables a sense of ownership, enabling communities and SMEs to better respond to challenges.
- 4. Drives Innovation:** Partnering with communities unlocks local knowledge and fresh ideas, enriching SME operations and projects.
- 5. Strengthens Reputation:** SMEs perceived as socially responsible gain goodwill, strengthening their brand and loyalty.



5 Effective Engagement Approaches

Engagement should be a lasting conversation, not just a one-off survey. Building meaningful relationships with communities isn't about having all the answers—it's about showing up, listening, and collaborating. Involve the people and groups who are affected by the process from the outset of any planning or decision-making process. Make sure that a wide range of opinions and perspectives are included and valued in the engagement process.

1. **Active Listening:** Start With Understanding Needs
2. **Inclusivity and Representation:** Make Everyone Feel Heard
3. **Transparent Communication:** Be Open and Honest
4. **Shared Decision-Making:** Collaborate, Don't Dictate
5. **Measure and Adapt:** Learn and Grow Together



01

Active Listening

Start With Understanding Needs

Think of this as the foundation of any relationship—listening! Whether you're a bakery in a small town or a tech startup in an urban hub, taking the time to understand what matters to the community is crucial.

How? Conduct surveys, workshops, or town halls to understand community needs. Prioritise feedback loops to show that input leads to action.

For example, a local SME could host a casual meet-up or workshop to hear concerns and ideas directly from residents. If you're a **small retailer**, consider running a survey asking customers what products they feel are missing in the area. And don't stop there—act on their feedback. People are much more likely to trust and support you when they see that their input leads to real action.



02

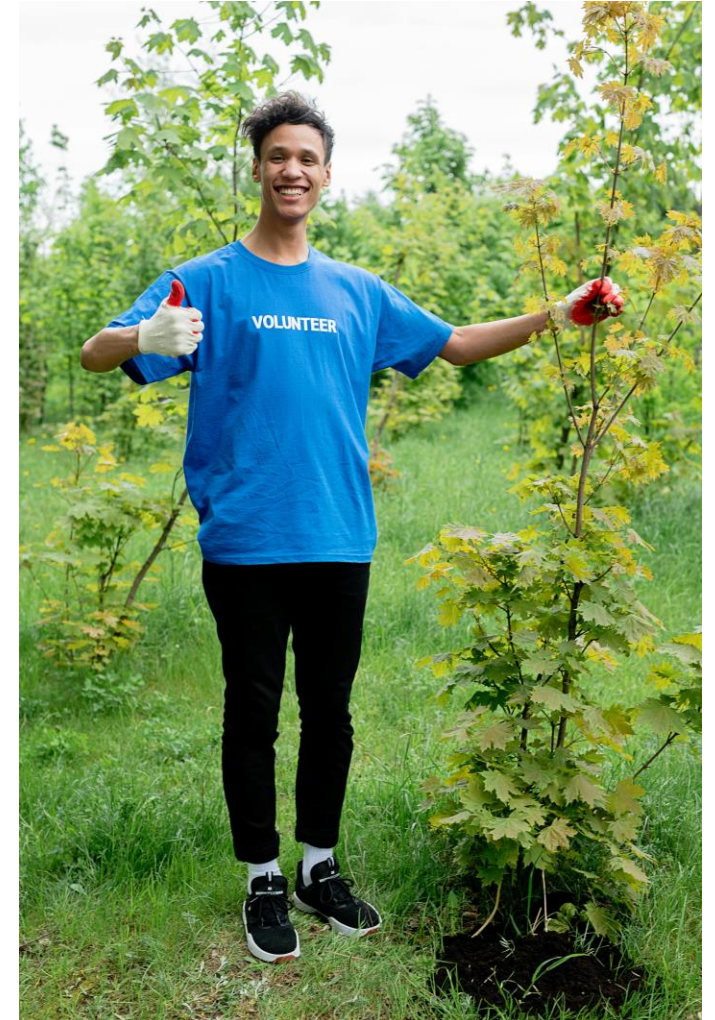
Inclusivity and Representation

Make Everyone Feel Heard

Communities are diverse, so your engagement efforts should reflect that. Go beyond the obvious voices. Engage with groups that might be overlooked, such as youth organizations, local artisans, or underrepresented cultural communities.

How? Engage underrepresented groups, ensuring all voices are heard. Create accessible platforms for dialogue and collaboration.

For example, if you're launching a **community garden project**, invite different stakeholders to the table—schools, senior groups, and even local environmental activists. A shared project like this builds bridges between groups while creating a sense of collective achievement.



03

Transparent Communication

Be Open and Honest

No one likes surprises when it comes to community initiatives. Be clear about what your business is hoping to achieve, the resources you're bringing to the table, and any limitations you might have.

How? Be clear about objectives, limitations, and potential outcomes. Share progress updates to maintain trust and accountability.

For example, a **small construction company** working on a new project could host an open house to explain timelines and anticipated disruptions. This transparency helps manage expectations and builds trust. Follow up with regular updates, like a newsletter or community board posts, so everyone knows what's happening every step of the way.



04

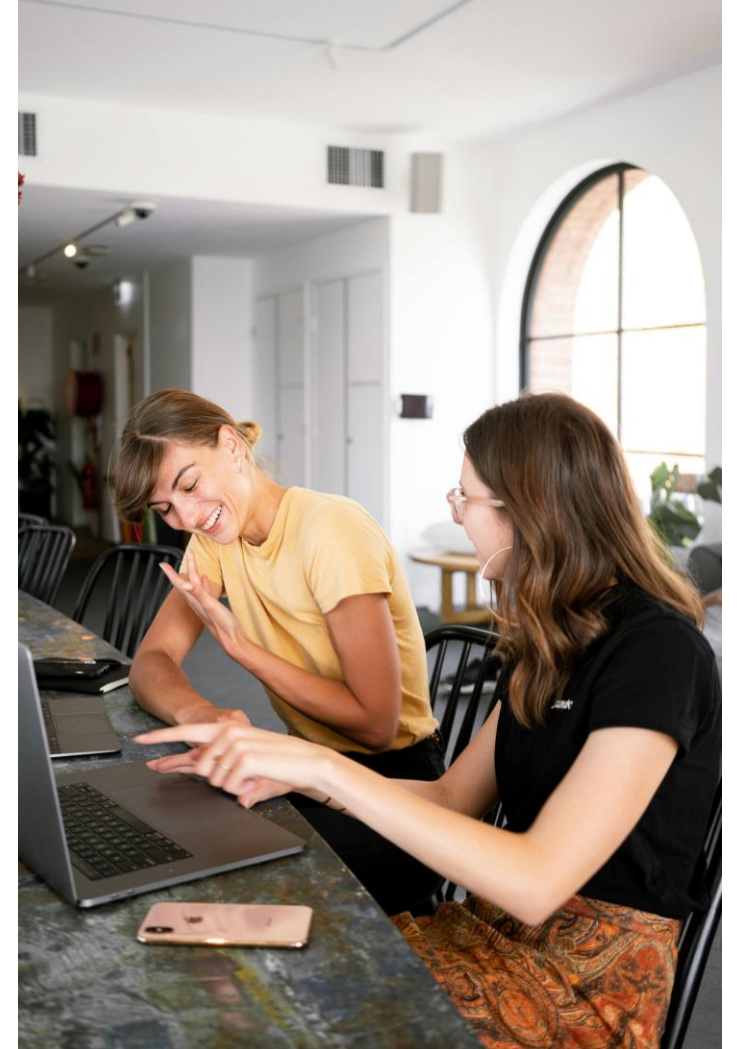
Shared Decision-Making

Collaborate, Don't Dictate

True engagement means the community isn't just a spectator; they're part of the process. Work with community leaders or local organizations to co-design projects and initiatives.

How? Collaborate with community leaders to shape initiatives. Give communities a stake in project ownership and outcomes.

For example, Imagine a local SME organising a **neighbourhood event**, such as a street art festival. Instead of planning everything internally, invite local artists and residents to be part of the organizing committee. Not only does this make the event more meaningful to the community, but it also ensures the outcomes align with their values and goals.



05

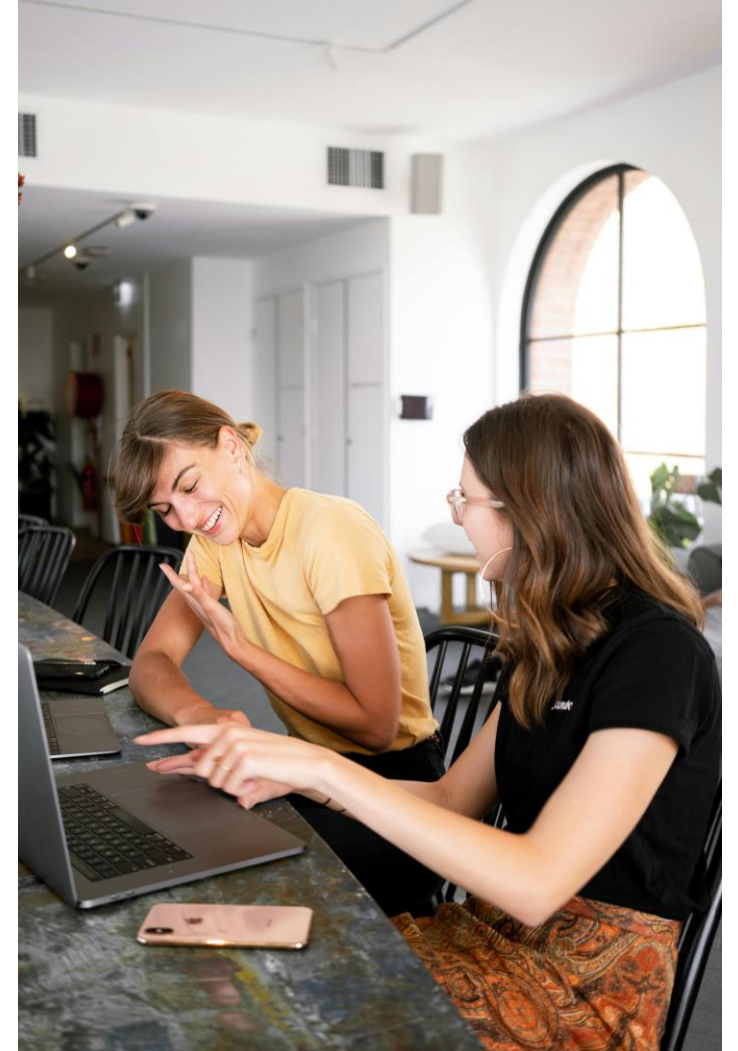
Measure and Adapt

Learn and Grow Together

Engagement isn't a one-and-done deal—it's a process. Use simple metrics to measure your success, like attendance at events, feedback forms, or even informal chats to gauge satisfaction.

How? Use metrics to evaluate engagement success (e.g., participation rates, satisfaction levels). Continuously refine strategies based on community feedback.

For example, if your SME organizes a **workshop series** for small business owners, follow up to see how participants felt. Did they learn something useful? What could you improve for next time? Take their insights seriously and adjust your approach. When the community sees that you're willing to grow and adapt, they'll trust your intentions even more.



Final Note...

Effective engagement is about creating real long-lasting partnerships with the community. Whether you're organizing a town clean-up, supporting local schools, or collaborating on a cultural event, the key is to listen, involve, and stay transparent.

When SMEs focus on collaboration rather than just ticking a box, they not only strengthen their relationships with the community but also create lasting value for everyone involved. By taking small, meaningful steps—like hosting workshops, involving underrepresented groups, or simply keeping people informed—SMEs can transform their role from a business serving a community to being an integral part of it.

So, the next time you're planning an initiative, ask yourself: *Who can we bring along on this journey? How can we make this a shared success story?* That's where true engagement begins.

Case Study

Doolin Boutique Hotel, Clare, Ireland

(Empowering Communities)



Hotel Doolin is a for-profit business shaping the tourism industry with its arsenal of sustainable products and practices. This small hotel is situated off Ireland's west coast in a small humble fishing village. Their focus is to improve their communities and region, and lessen their carbon footprint by reducing waste, water, and energy use in more ways than one.

Introduction: Hotel Doolin, Clare, Ireland

Hotel Doolin always takes the view to promote Doolin as a destination more than the hotel itself, they operate the village Tourist Info promoting all North Clare has to offer.

Hotel Doolin has redesigned the normal hotel practices by contributing positively by innovating their products, processes, and services, which in themselves are thriving from both an economical and an environmental standpoint. The hotel is recognised for its great water efficiency, eco-barn, outdoor recreation, and overall sustainable tourism. What Hotel Doolin represents is the redesign of not only hotels but businesses as a whole.

The hotel's environmental management policy emphasizes people, profit, and the planet by reducing, reusing, and recycling in any way they can. They have also minimized their usages of vehicles and continue to apply green initiatives.



SDGs Embedded in Sustainability Goals

By inspiring to give back to the community, the ecosystem, and to achieve a better, more sustainable future for all, the new methods and ideas that they proudly revolve around exhibit a net positive impact that focuses on healthy aspects. Hotel Doolin demonstrates a breakthrough in society's routines by improving practices that reduce harm via their thriving organized structure.

Some of the sustainability goals that have been represented within this hotel include **SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production** and goal **15 Life on Land**, **SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities**, **SDG 17 Partnership for Goals**. They have demonstrated these purposes by working with local businesses, charities and networks, implementing green practices such as recycling paper, cardboard, and glass and not selling any single-use plastics and offsetting their carbon footprint by planting 10 trees per wedding they host on their land via [hometree.ie](https://www.hometree.ie).

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Aine Martin, The Green Manager of Hotel Doolin

Aine mentioned that the main motivation for Hotel Doolin adopting sustainable practices was simply down to the town of Doolin itself. They wanted to focus on protecting the community and the surrounding area of Doolin. Since Doolin is located near many of Ireland's most popular natural tourist spots, Aine revealed that it was a responsibility of their own to try to help look after these locations, such as the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher.

<https://aim2flourish.com/innovations/hotel-doolin-changing-the-hotel-industry-for-the-better>



Aine Martin, The Green Manager Of Hotel Doolin

The hotel has also increased its involvement with the community, as well as only purchasing produce and goods locally. Because of these initiatives, Aine states that people visit from all over the world, as they are drawn to the hotel as they themselves are becoming self-aware of their own carbon footprint and want to do that little bit to help, highlighting the difference that Hotel Doolin is making on the world.

<https://aim2flourish.com/innovations/hotel-doolin-changing-the-hotel-industry-for-the-better>



<https://www.hoteldoolin.ie/corporate-and-social-responsibility.html>

Community & Business Engagement

According to Aine, their drive for sustainability came from “**three motivations,**” including to “**increase our involvement with the community, and to purchase locally.**”

- ❖ **Part of the Community:** Hotel Doolin is involved in several local community groups, including the **Burren Eco Tourism Network, Doolin Tourism Co-op, Burren & Cliffs Of Moher Geopark,** and the **Tidy Towns Committee** with staff members, actively involved with these committees.
- ❖ **Fundraising for the Community:** Since 2016 Hotel Doolin has raised over €100,000 for many different causes. **Doolin FolkFest for Samaritans,** Coffee mornings for **Milford Hospice,** Coffee mornings for the **Irish Cancer Society** and Climb Carrauntoohil for **Samaritans**



Community & Business Engagement

- ❖ **Work with Local Businesses:** They provide business to local restaurants and shops through enhanced tourism due to their innovation as “**Ireland’s only carbon-neutral hotel.**”
- ❖ They have a ‘**30-mile menu**’ where “Every ingredient featured on the menu is foraged, reared, caught, grown, or produced in County Clare not more than 30 miles ‘as the crow flies’ from the hotel”. The 30-mile menu not only strengthens local livelihoods but also reduces the carbon footprint associated with the sourcing of ingredients. See the delicious menu and the list of local suppliers <https://www.hoteldoolin.ie/glas-restaurant.html>.

Aine mentions that even when people are getting married in the hotel, “they’ll buy their **flowers from local suppliers.**” Likewise, the hotel spends over 1.5 million euros on hotel **purchases from local suppliers**, with “70% of our food on the menu is sourced locally from within a 50km radius”. In 2023 the hotel spent over €2 million on local suppliers for hotel purchases.

Local Community Impact

Inclusive Workplace and Employment:

The innovation has also allowed the hotel to become a huge employer in the town, with over **130 local staff** (Hotel Doolin, n.d.). They provide employees, guests, and locals free access to weekly yoga sessions in our **Eco Barn**. They provide all staff with a free nutritional consultation and all staff enjoy free gym membership to **Lahinch Leisure Centre**.

Meet their Chef Jamie Hagen

<https://doolin.ie/meet-our-chefs-jamie-hagen/>



Local Events & Inspiring Industry

Local Events: The hotel also sets up festivals such as folk and surf festivals three times a year for the community. These are known as “Doolin Festivals, which is more of a community initiative because we don’t call it **Hotel Doolin Festival.**”

Continued Improvement & Impact: Although Covid-19 impacted the business and many of their community fundraising initiatives, they are still looking to the future and how they can continue improving their innovation, “ we are looking into PV solar panels at the hotel.” The hotel hopes that larger companies in the industry will recognise and take note of their operations, suggesting that the implementation of sustainable practices only involves “a bit of creativity and teamwork” (McMahon, 2019).



According to McMahon (2019), the sustainable innovation and practice implemented by Hotel Doolin have had an incredibly positive impact on the hotel, with the business growing by thirty percent. Their hard work has not gone unnoticed, with the hotel being awarded the ‘Green company of the Year’ award, the ‘Green Tourism and Entertainment’ Award, and the ‘Green Festivals’ Award, to name a few.

<https://aim2flourish.com/innovations/hotel-doolin-changing-the-hotel-industry-for-the-better>



2019 Energy Awards Finalist - Energy Team Category - Hotel Doolin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_hceLL0Kdk

Learn how the team set targets, meet monthly and put different initiatives and actions in place to achieve environmental and community goals.

Dig Deeper

Empowering Inclusive Communities



Approach

Empowering Communities

Where SME community engagement isn't just a business initiative—but an act of empowerment.

Empowering communities isn't about swooping in with solutions—it's about collaboration, inclusivity, and supporting people to take the lead in shaping their futures.

Empowering communities is about creating environments where people feel seen, heard, and valued. It's not just about helping them meet their goals—it's about walking alongside them as partners.

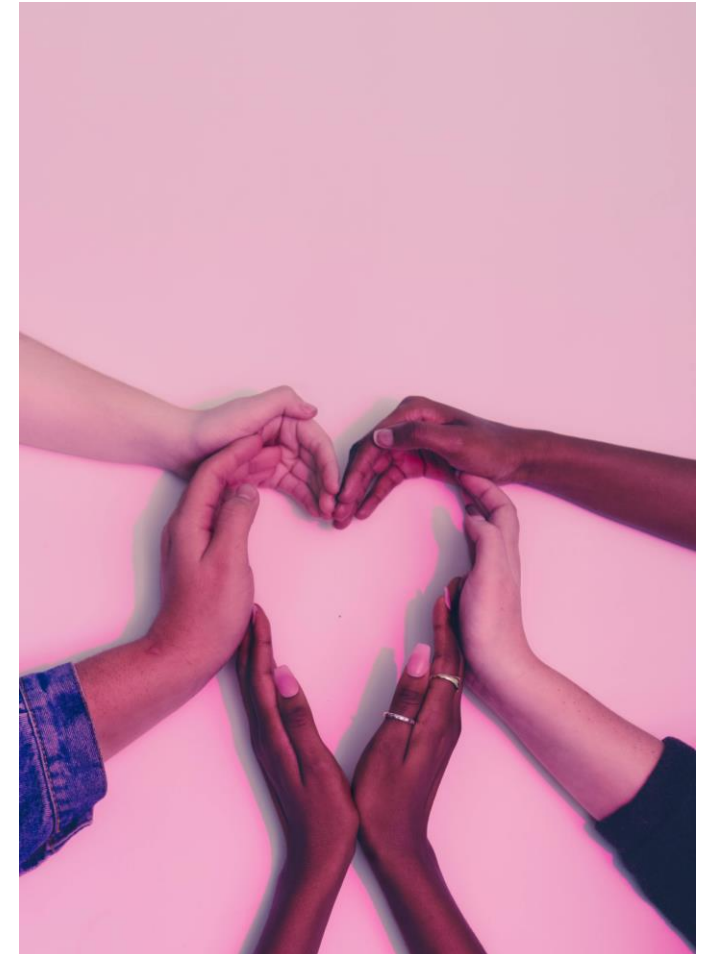


Empowering Inclusive Communities

Empowering communities means enabling people to take ownership of their development, enabling collaboration, and addressing their unique needs. SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) are perfectly positioned to drive this process as they are often deeply rooted in their communities.

SMEs can empower community members to explore, plan and act together on their priority issues can be a powerful way to strengthen collective capacity and improve programme equity and effectiveness.

- ❖ It requires community members, leaders and companies to play a central role in the development of community and **social initiatives** that affect them.
- ❖ Engagement is between people and businesses is both **formal and informal**. It involves collaborating, participatory ideation, planning, implementation and monitoring



- ❖ Empowering communities requires **social accountability** and **systematic commitment**. This means prioritising community participation in design and implementation, integrating community engagement, and mobilising resources or supports for meaningful, long-term relationship building.

When SMEs focus on listening, co-creation, and inclusivity, they transform from service providers into true partners in community development. By asking, “How can we uplift and empower together?” they pave the way for sustainable progress that benefits everyone involved. Here are 5 ways you can empower your community.

1. **Participatory Engagement:** Involving the Community in Decision-Making
2. **Capacity Building:** Equipping Communities with Skills and Resources
3. **Economic Empowerment:** Creating Opportunities for Livelihoods
4. **Social Empowerment:** Promoting and Advocating for Inclusivity and Representation
5. **Advocacy and Awareness:** Raising Awareness About Key Issues
6. **Infrastructure Support:** Facilitating Access to Tools and Resources



01

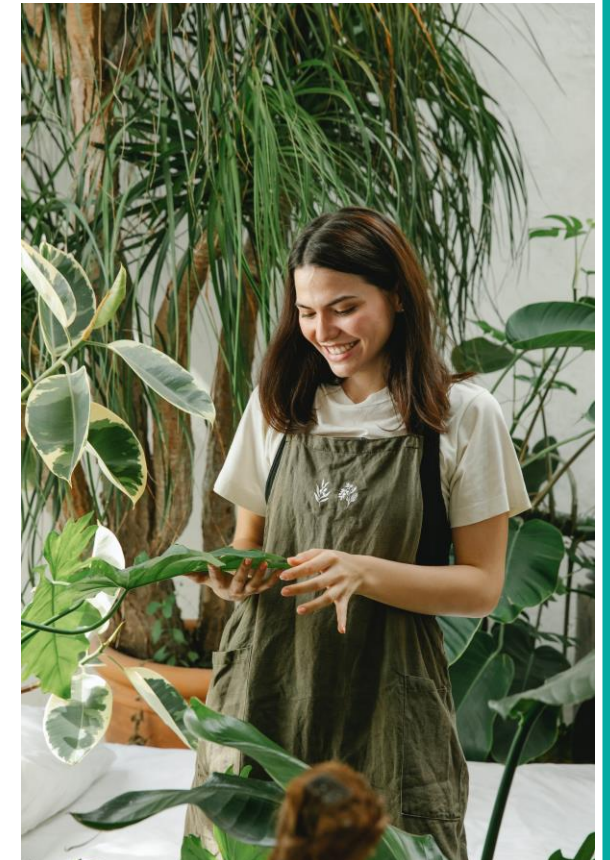
Participatory Engagement

Involving the Community in Decision-Making

Participatory engagement is about ensuring communities have a voice in shaping initiatives that affect them. Instead of imposing solutions, SMEs collaborate with the community to identify needs and co-create strategies. By involving the community, SMEs ensure the initiative aligns with local priorities, making it more impactful and sustainable.

How? Organize community forums, workshops, or focus groups to gather input. Include diverse representatives—youth, seniors, cultural groups, and local leaders. Use surveys or feedback forms to capture a broader perspective. Let the community play an active role in planning and execution.

For example, A small **food retail store** planning to redesign its product offerings could host a series of workshops where customers share their needs. This might reveal a demand for locally sourced products, prompting collaboration with nearby farmers or artisans to meet this need.



02

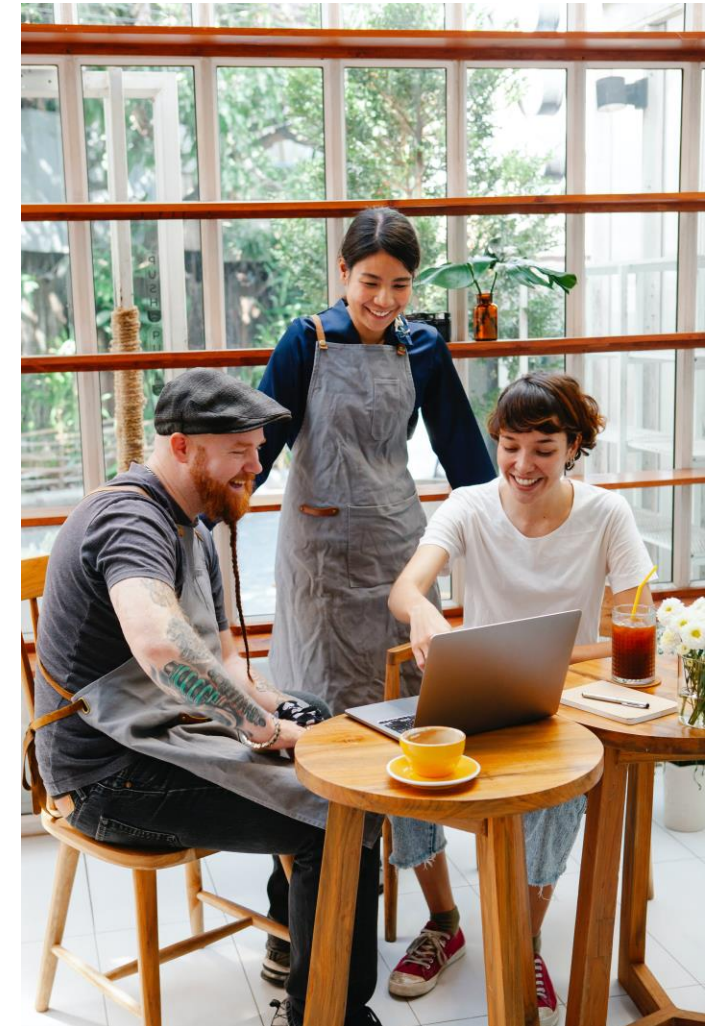
Capacity Building

Equipping Communities with Skills & Resources

Empowerment often requires skills, knowledge, or resources. SMEs can help communities build capacity by offering training, mentorship, or access to tools. Building capacity ensures the community can independently sustain progress over time, reducing dependency and enabling resilience.

How? Assess what skills or resources the community needs to thrive. Offer workshops, webinars, or on-site training programs. Partner with local experts, NGOs, or educational institutions for support.

For example, A small **tech firm** could organize digital literacy workshops for local nonprofits, teaching them how to use technology to amplify their causes. Similarly, a bakery could host sessions for aspiring entrepreneurs on how to manage food production efficiently.



03

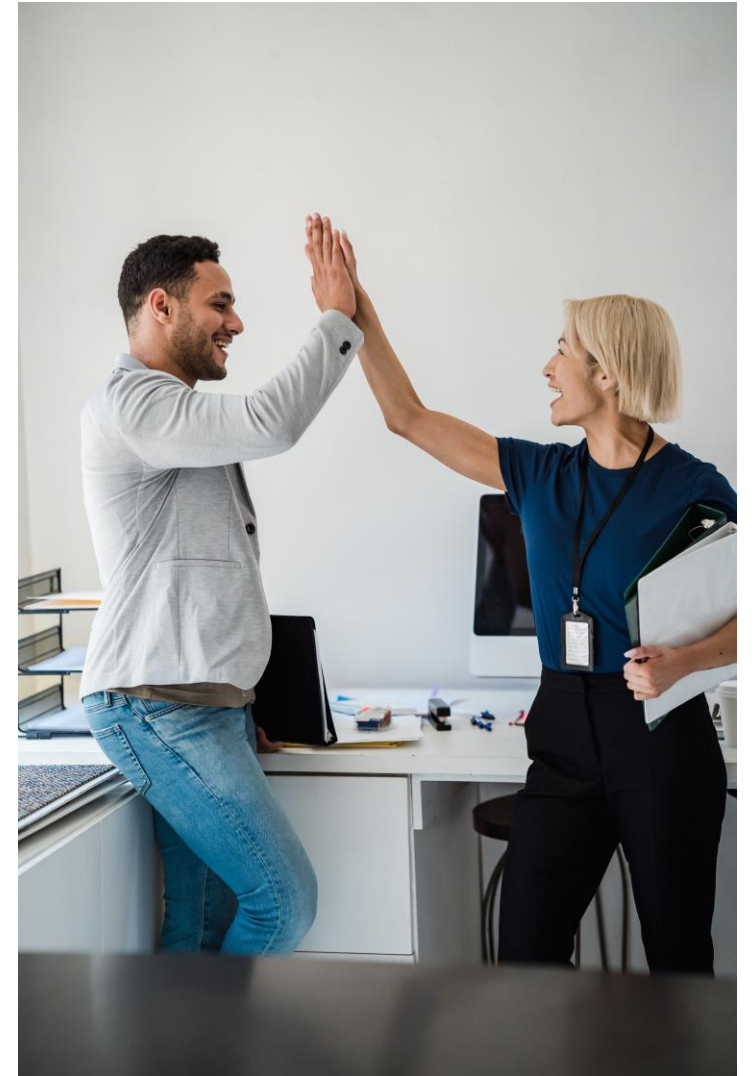
Economic Empowerment

Creating Opportunities for Livelihoods

Economic empowerment focuses on creating income-generating opportunities that uplift communities. SMEs can contribute by hiring locally, sourcing from local suppliers, or supporting local entrepreneurship. By enabling financial independence, economic empowerment creates a ripple effect, enhancing community well-being and stability.

How? Partner with local suppliers to strengthen the local economy. Offer apprenticeships or internships to develop local talent. Create spaces for local artisans or businesses to showcase and sell their products.

For example, A **boutique** might collaborate with local artisans to feature handmade jewelry or textiles, providing them with a market for their products.



04

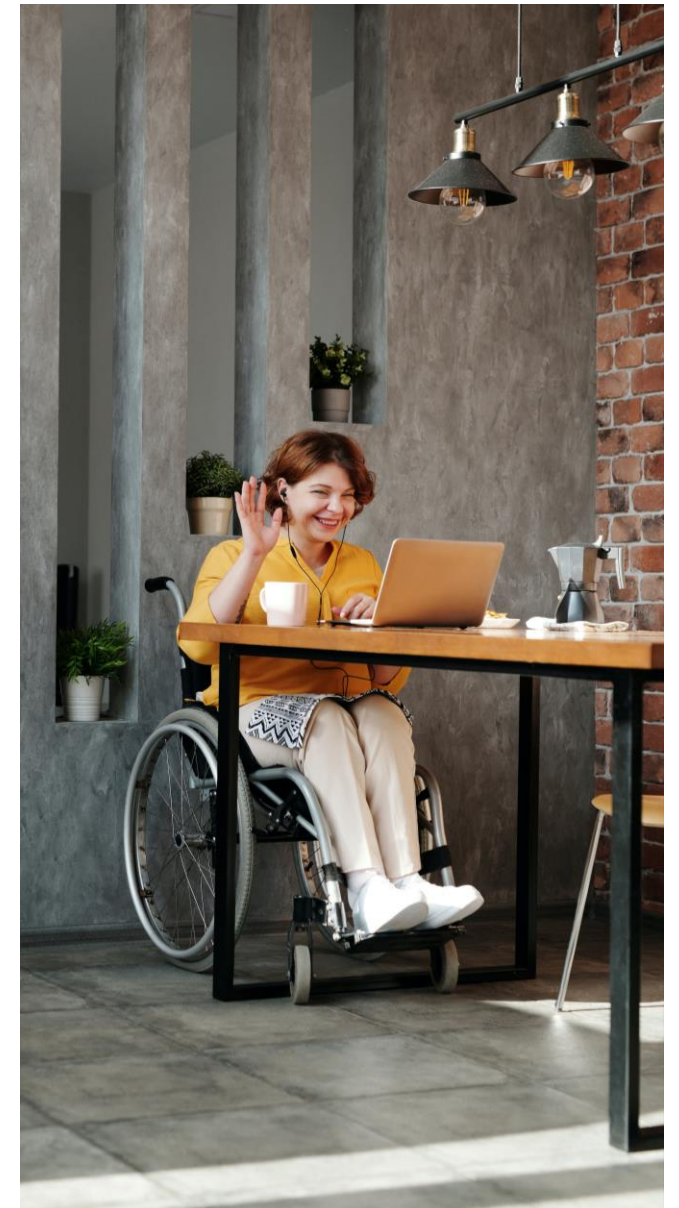
Social Empowerment

Ensuring Inclusivity & Representation

Social empowerment involves amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups and creating inclusive opportunities for them to participate meaningfully. Inclusivity strengthens community bonds and ensures that no one is left behind in the journey toward collective progress.

How? Identify groups within the community that may be marginalised or overlooked. Create safe spaces for dialogue, ensuring all voices are heard. Design initiatives that address barriers to participation, such as accessibility or language differences.

For example, A **small café** could host cultural storytelling nights, inviting members of underrepresented groups to share their experiences. A **fitness studio** could offer free or low-cost sessions tailored for seniors or people with disabilities.



05

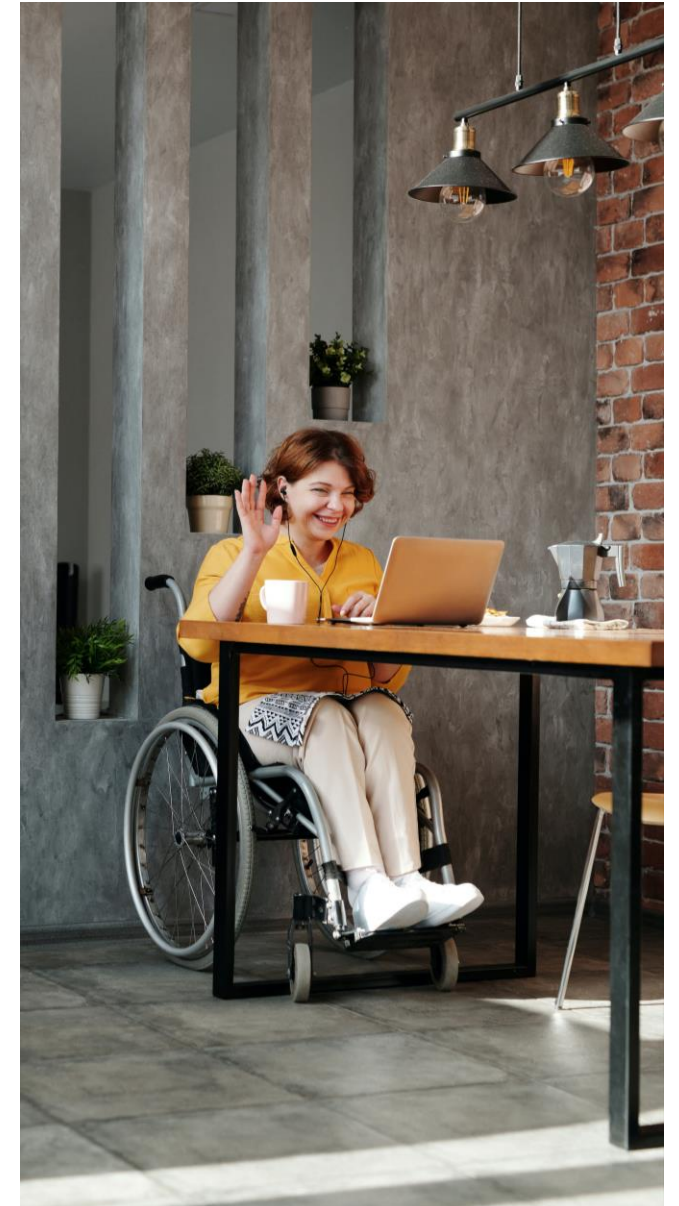
Advocacy and Awareness

Raise Awareness About Key Issues

SMEs can empower communities by being advocates for important social, environmental, or economic issues, educating people, and encouraging action. Awareness campaigns encourage communities to adopt new practices and take ownership of solving local challenges.

How? Leverage social media, events, or collaborations to spread awareness. Create educational materials or campaigns that inform the community. Partner with local organizations or NGOs to amplify the message.

For example, A **local clothing brand** could launch a campaign highlighting the benefits of sustainable fashion, educating customers on how their choices impact the environment. A grocery store could promote workshops on reducing food waste and composting.



06

Infrastructure Support

Facilitate Access to Tools, Services & Resources

SMEs can support communities by providing resources, infrastructure, or facilities that help them achieve their goals. Access to resources empowers communities to take actionable steps toward self-improvement, unlocking potential that may have been previously untapped.

How? Identify gaps in community resources (e.g., access to technology, meeting spaces, or equipment). Offer unused resources (like a venue or equipment) or sponsor initiatives to address these gaps. Provide micro-grants or seed funding to support community-driven projects.

For example, A local **co-working space** could offer free meeting rooms for community groups or budding entrepreneurs. A **construction SME** might partner with the community to build a new playground or renovate a library.



Case Study

Tico Mail Works, Ireland are mailing experts that print, pack and post your letters, invoices and documents.

Our Company Mission

To deliver a world class mailing and postal service to our customers, providing for our employees a satisfying career, our suppliers a trustworthy professional business partner, support for the community, protection for the environment, and at the same time doing what we can to help achieve the UN SDGs. We aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.



Tico Mail Works, SDG Community Engagement

Our company strives to act in a socially and environmentally responsible manner at all times by following our principles, which, since September 2015, are the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These Goals include two on which we place specific emphasis:

SDG 5 – Gender Equality

SDG 10 – Equality For All



Environmental Commitment: Tico Mail Works considers environmental protection an essential part of our business model. <https://www.ticomailworks.ie/?p=environment>

Encourage connections between the employees and our local community– for example we run our own fundraising events (breakfast, sponsored events, whip arounds, competitions); these not only support local and international causes but also are great for team morale.

Tico Mail Works, Community Engagement



- ❖ **Employment Provider:** We recognise our sustainable business practices will help ensure the survival and continuation of our business and long-term employment of our employees. We currently provide 38 full and part time positions
- ❖ **Community Projects:** We are involved in both ad-hoc and targeted community projects on an ongoing basis, many of which are of significant importance to our employees. Everyone in the company gets involved in these fun events, which also raise money for various charities e.g. Irish Cancer Society, ISPCC etc. Others include:
- ❖ **Engagement with Saoirse,** who provide short term refuge accommodation for women and children suffering domestic abuse, and a 24-hour helpline providing support and a listening, non-judgemental ear.
- ❖ **Tico Mail Works Quarterly Coffee Mornings.** We run our very own fund-raising coffee mornings approximately every 3 months.

Learning Outcomes

What I Have Learned

- **Ability to Create Shared Value** – I can now identify opportunities to align my business goals with community needs, promoting mutual growth and impact.
- **Enhanced Inclusive Engagement Skills** – I understand the importance of active listening, honest communication, and collaboration in building trust.
- **Confidence in Empowering Local Communities** – I can apply strategies that support leadership, mobilisation, and long-term sustainability within communities.
- **Knowledge of Participatory Approaches** – I recognise how co-creation and shared decision-making contribute to more effective and inclusive community initiatives.
- **Awareness of Economic & Social Benefits** – I understand how inclusive engagement leads to stronger economies, social resilience, and improved quality of life.



Well Done!

Module 6 Part 3

Complete Module 6 Part 4: Prepare for an Effective Community Engagement Framework: A Step- by-Step Guide

www.projectdare.eu



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