National Landholder + Community Engagement Training: Community of Practice Follow Up

Institute for Infrastructure in Society
infrastructure.anu.edu.au

November 2025

Next Generation **Engagement**

Australian National University

CRAWFORD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

Acknowledgement of Country

The ANU Institute for Infrastructure in Society acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Wiradjuri people, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

About us

Next Generation Engagement (NextGen) is the research implementation division of the Australian National University Institute for Infrastructure in Society (I2S).

I2S is the world's leading research institute focused on community engagement, social licence and social risk management in the infrastructure sector.

I2S has 8 years of evidence compiled with the input of >7,000 community members and >150 infrastructure organisations including Commonwealth and State Government agencies and tier 1 international contractors and consultancies.

NextGen assists infrastructure proponents to apply I2S' world leading research and evidence based social tools including through professional development training.

I2S is based at the Australian National University, Crawford School of Public Policy – the number 1 public policy institute in the Asia Pacific Region and number 6 in the world.

Our Partners

More than 150 infrastructure organisations have participated in our flagship research, the Next Generation Engagement Program, including our valued industry partners who are delivering >$230B of Australia's infrastructure pipeline.
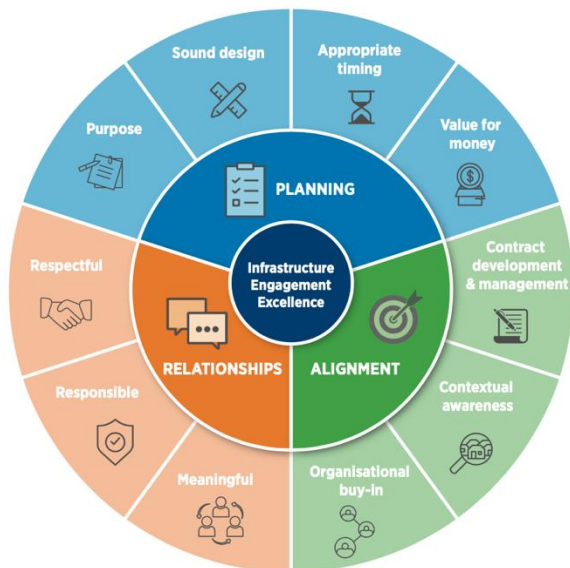
Major partners:

Supporters:

Research firsts from I2S

The first best practice standards for engagement in infrastructure – underpinned by research with community members and >150 infrastructure proponents.

State of Infrastructure and Engagement

2019-2020 | April 2021

www.nextgenengagement.org

Next Generation Engagement

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Infrastructure Engagement Excellence

PLANNING
- Sound design
- Appropriate timing
- Value for money

ALIGNMENT
- Contract development & management
- Contextual awareness
- Organisational buy-in

RELATIONSHIPS
- Purpose
- Respectful
- Responsible
- Meaningful

Australia's first long term study into stakeholder pressure and project delays.

Working with >7000 community members to identify what drives project acceptance and community resilience.

World-first tools to identify, price and manage social risks in the infrastructure sector.

Key evidence for working in collaboration with communities

Community and stakeholder opposition is driving costs and delays

At the heart of contractual disputes

Research by I2S partners, the G20 Global Infrastructure Hub, puts social and environmental issues at the heart of greater than 30% of contractual disputes.

Reducing investor confidence

Infrastructure Partnerships Australia found that global infrastructure investors rate socio-political risk and related public policy uncertainty as a leading cause not to invest in Australian infrastructure.

For 7 consecutive years, industry respondents to the I2S State of Infrastructure and Engagement Survey have rated stakeholder and community pressure as one of the leading causes of project delay.
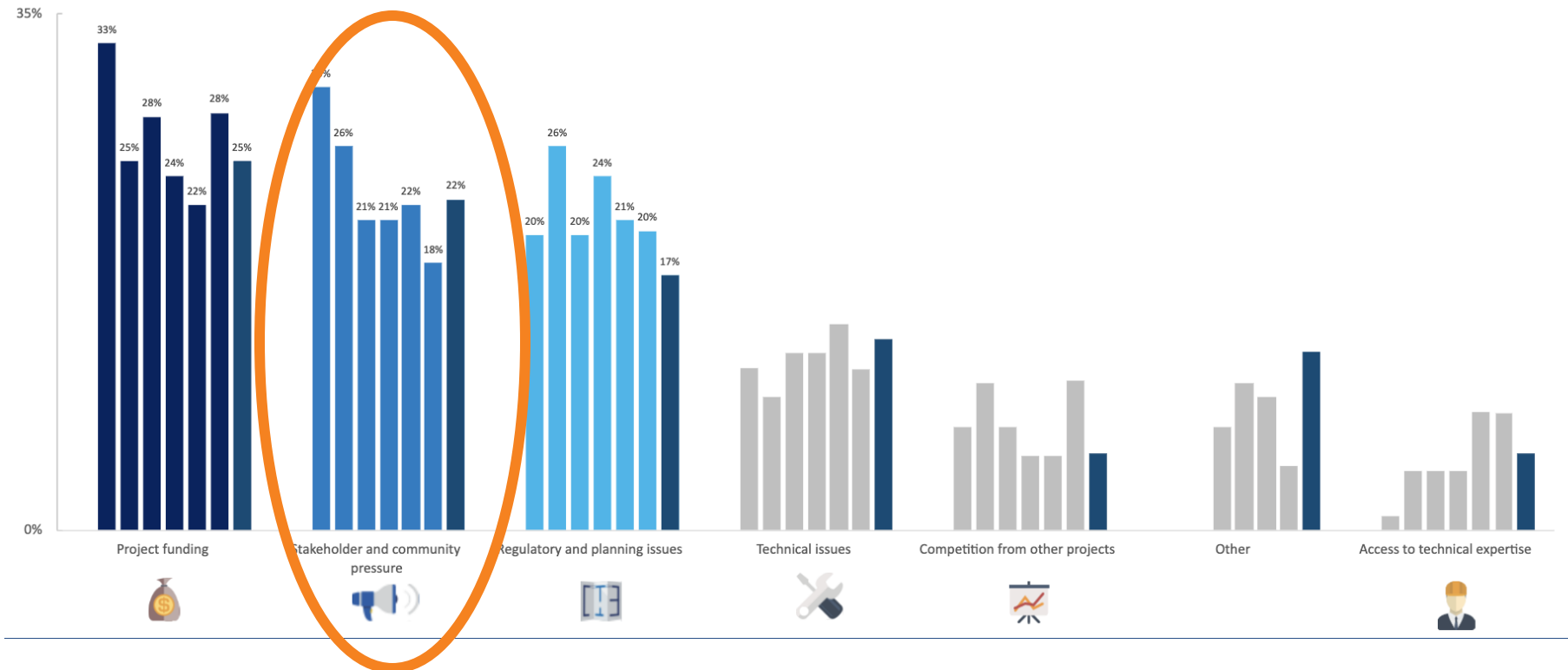
Drivers of Project Acceptance in Australian Communities
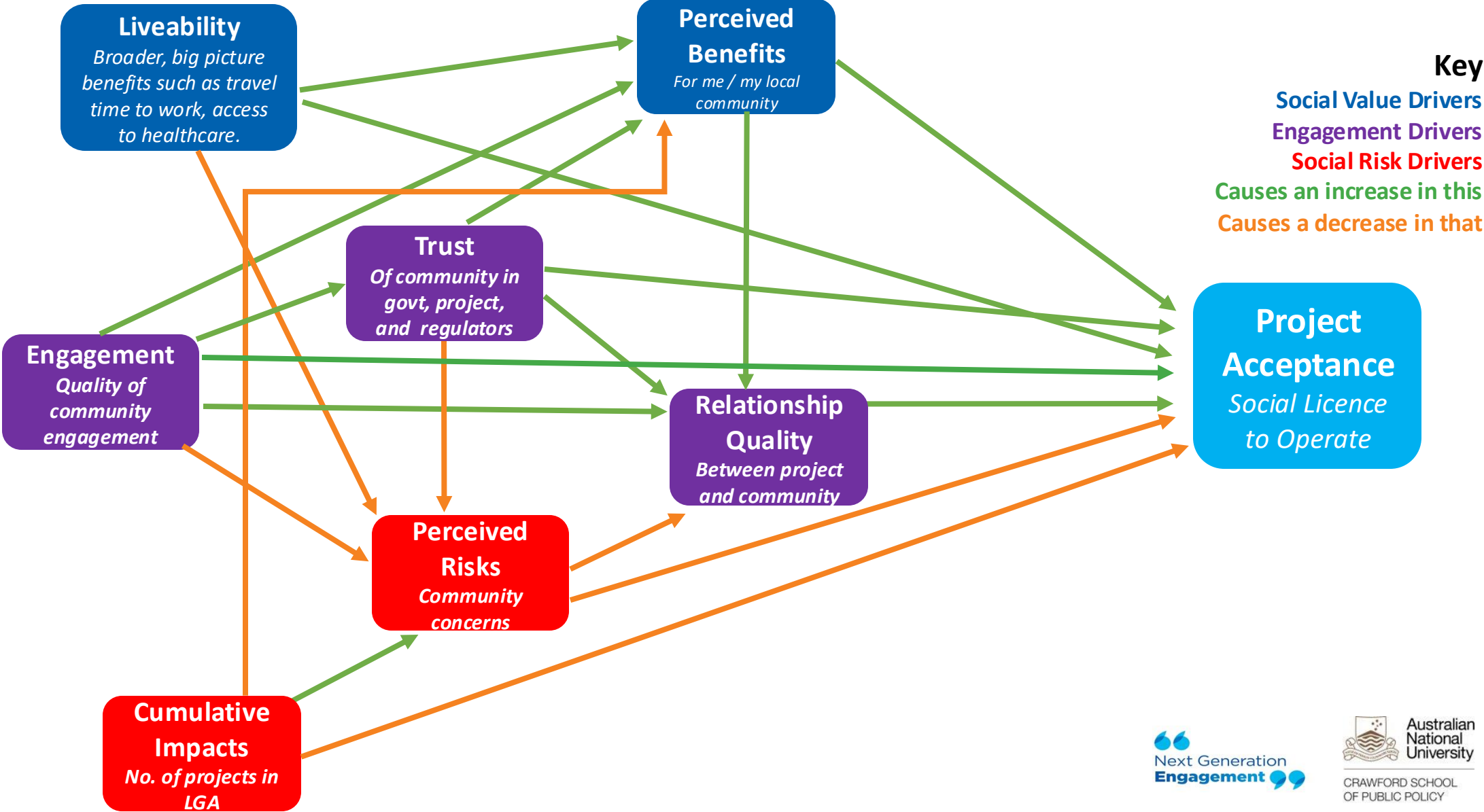
Top 7 Highest Impact Social Risk Factors

- Land acquisitions
- Cumulative effects
- Political influence
- Damage to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural objects, places or heritage
- Damage to the environment
- Poor public communication
- Poor stakeholder engagement.

* Source: I2S ARC Project: Social Risk Management in the Australian Infrastructure Sector

High Impact Consequences when these social risks eventuate

- Community discontent and outrage

- Delays to program/works

- Political pressure

- Loss of trust/confidence by the community, influencing loss of support for project and social licence to operate

- Key stakeholder pushback

- Community wellbeing effects.

* Source: I2S ARC Project: Social Risk Management in the Australian Infrastructure Sector

A compelling story about social value

- Social value plays an important role in project outcomes according to industry professionals.
- Social value creation (perceived benefits), related to a project, is a major influence on levels of project acceptance and resilience.
- BUT social benefits must be understood within context, from a community perspective.
- There is no one 'community' and different groups and individuals within communities will differ in what 'social value' means to them.
- It's about putting in the work to understand how your project can contribute to community values, needs, priorities and aspirations for the future.

Better practice starts with knowing your community

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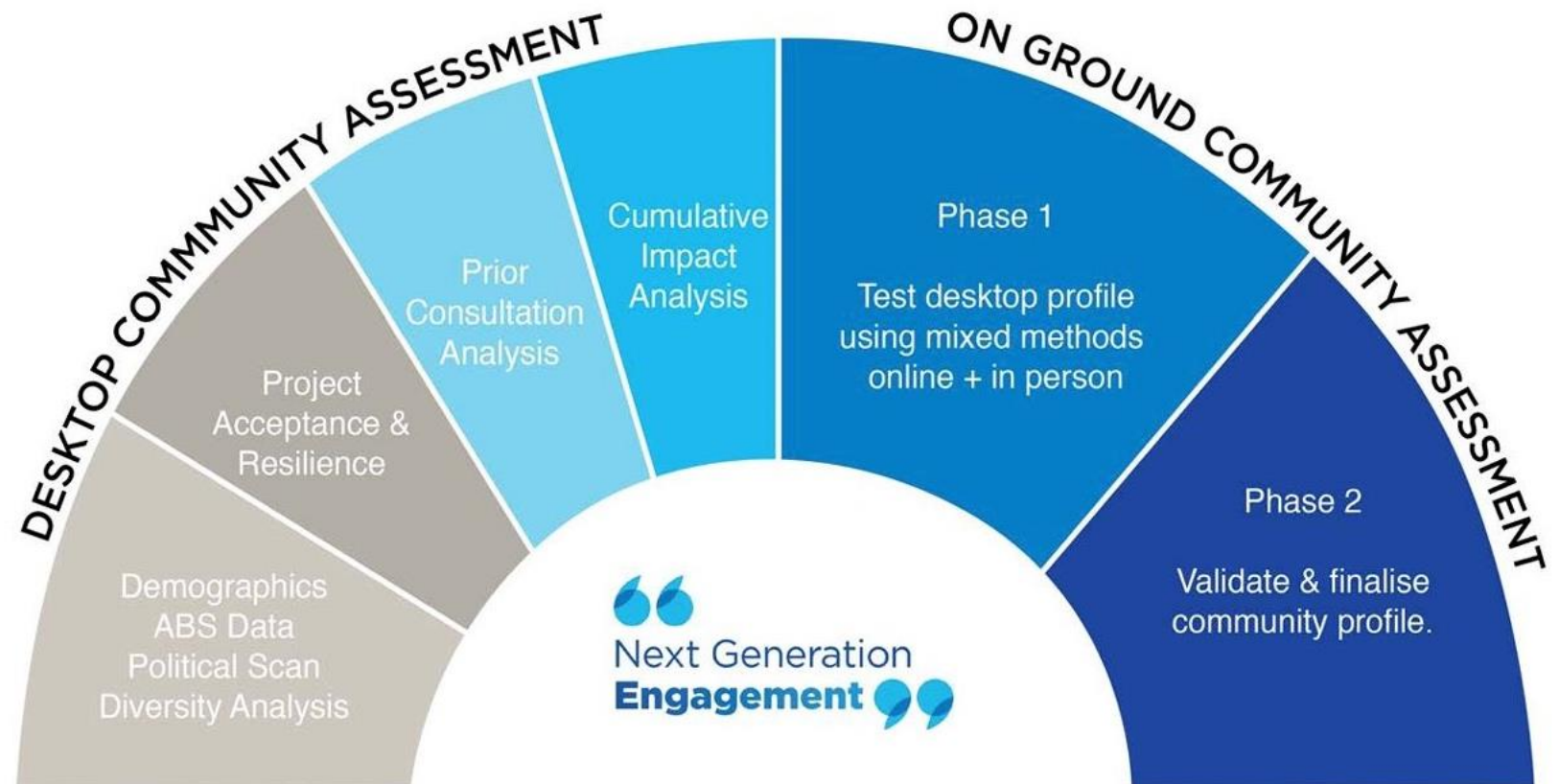
Next Generation Engagement

Robust multi-channel research that occurs ideally prior to the commencement of community engagement.

LGA / suburb level focus.

Informs social risk management and mitigation, social value initiatives and engagement approaches.

Develop at desktop level. Test and validate findings on ground.

I2S Social Due Diligence Method

DESKTOP COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

ON GROUND COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Demographics
ABS Data
Political Scan
Diversity Analysis

Project Acceptance & Resilience

Prior Consultation Analysis

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Phase 1
Test desktop profile using mixed methods online + in person

Phase 2
Validate & finalise community profile.

Next Generation Engagement

And utilizing evidence–based tools and approaches to support you

STRATEGY:
A clearly defined engagement strategy results in the entire project team and stakeholders being on the same page about what the engagement is about. It supports all involved in the engagement process to work together towards a set aim.

SOUND DESIGN:
Sound design results in a robust and legitimate engagement process. It results in more efficient and effective engagement that delivers value-for-money.

APPROPRIATE TIMING:
Appropriate timing results in the community engagement team being able to influence project design and timelines, even before the first stakeholder has been contacted. It supports the establishment of high-quality relationships that incorporate local knowledge. It also recognises that community-informed timelines may differ to project timelines.

VALUE FOR MONEY:
Value-for-money results in engagement plans and activities that are designed with a business case in mind to deliver cost-effective tangible and intangible returns-on-investment within an appropriate budget

RESPECTFUL:
Respectful relationships result in increased trust necessary for a social licence to operate. Respectful relationships support situations in which decisions are more likely be accepted, even where there is disagreement.

RESPONSIBLE:
Responsible relationships result in improved perceptions of process integrity and trust.

MEANINGFUL:
Meaningful engagement results in high quality interactions that strengthen trust, credibility, legitimacy and, ultimately, acceptance between the project and its stakeholders. This supports the project's social license to operate.

CONTRACT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT:
Results in a more consistent approach to communities to support high quality engagement, reduce social risks and improve outcomes.

CONTEXTUAL AWARENESS:
Contextual awareness results in more successful engagement that responds and adapts to relevant influences external to the project. It helps to reduce consultation fatigue among stakeholders and mitigates or prevents negative cumulative impacts.

ORGANISATIONAL BUY-IN:
Organisational buy-in results in community engagement being integrated into regular business processes. It supports better community-aligned project design, more realistic timelines, appropriate budgeting, reduced project risks and improved stakeholder experiences.

Download your free copy of the 2025 IEE Standards and Indicators here

Diagram: Infrastructure Engagement Excellence — PLANNING (Sound design, Appropriate timing, Strategy, Value for money), ALIGNMENT (Contract development & management, Contextual awareness, Organisational buy-in), RELATIONSHIPS (Respectful, Responsible, Meaningful)

In an environment of falling trust, cumulative impacts matter

Cumulative impacts: Local Surveys results
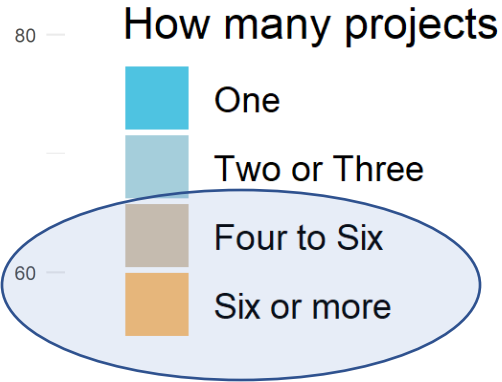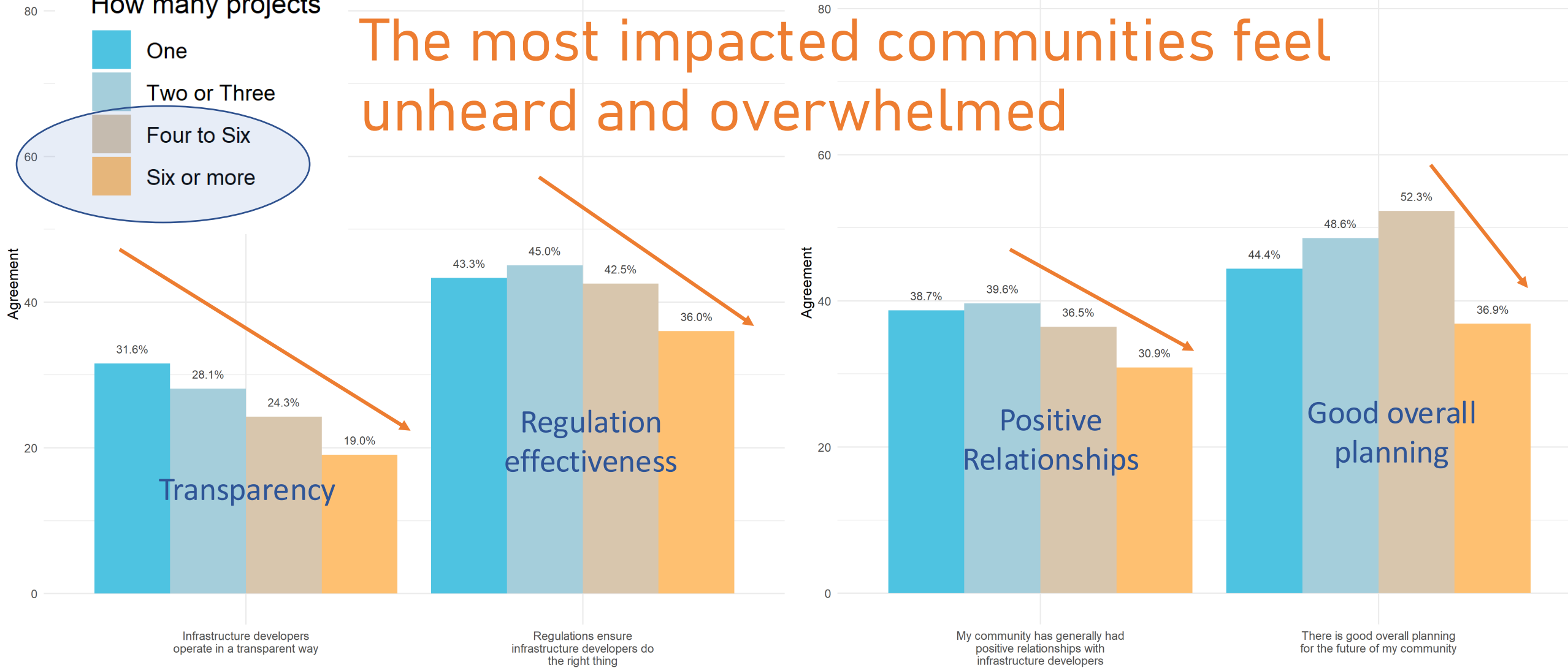
The most impacted communities feel unheard and overwhelmed

How many projects

- One
- Two or Three
- Four to Six
- Six or more

Transparency
- 31.6%
- 28.1%
- 24.3%
- 19.0%

Infrastructure developers operate in a transparent way

Regulation effectiveness
- 43.3%
- 45.0%
- 42.5%
- 36.0%

Regulations ensure infrastructure developers do the right thing

Positive Relationships
- 38.7%
- 39.6%
- 36.5%
- 30.9%

My community has generally had positive relationships with infrastructure developers

Good overall planning
- 44.4%
- 48.6%
- 52.3%
- 36.9%

There is good overall planning for the future of my community

Australian Perspectives on Infrastructure

We need to increase communication
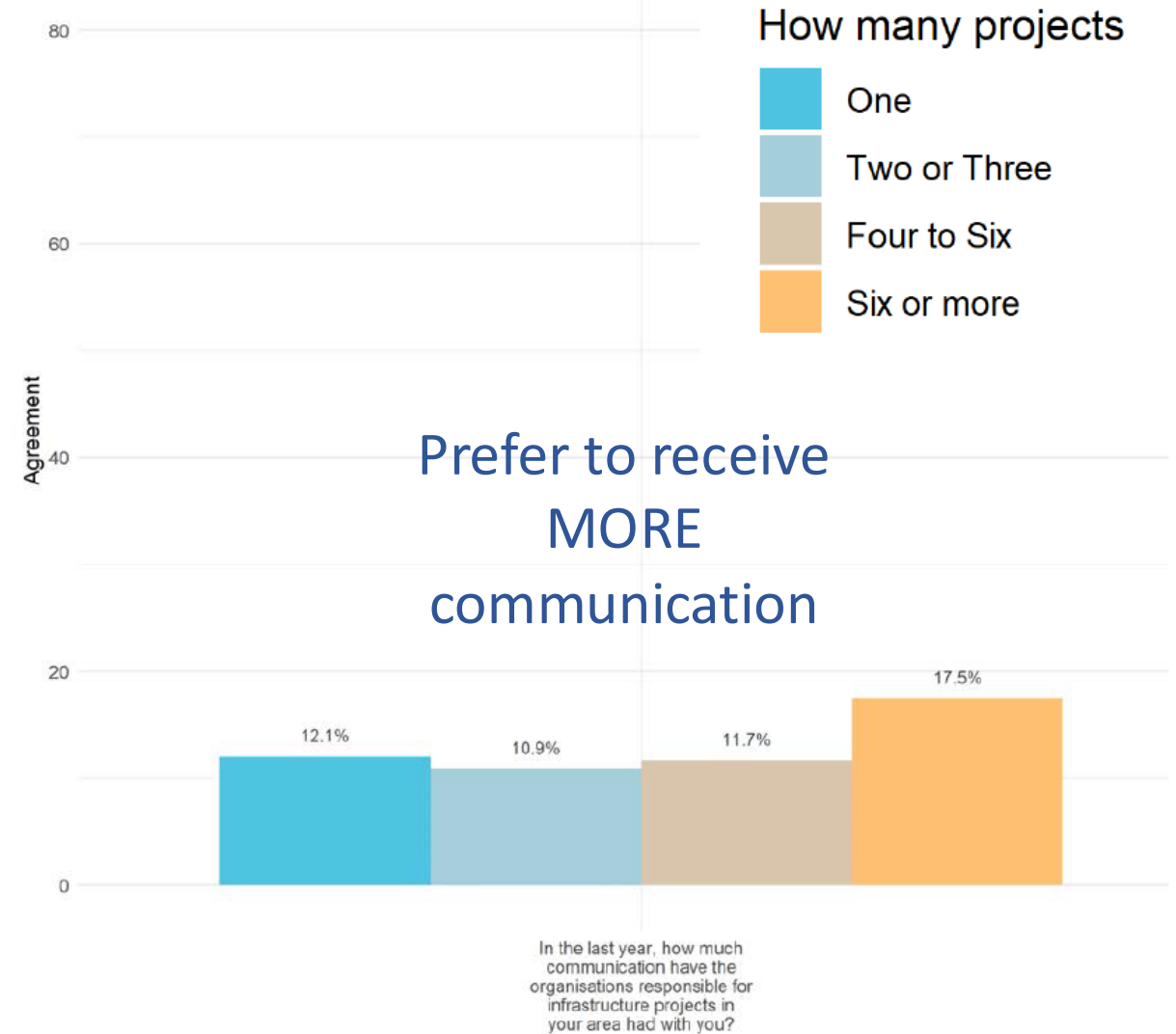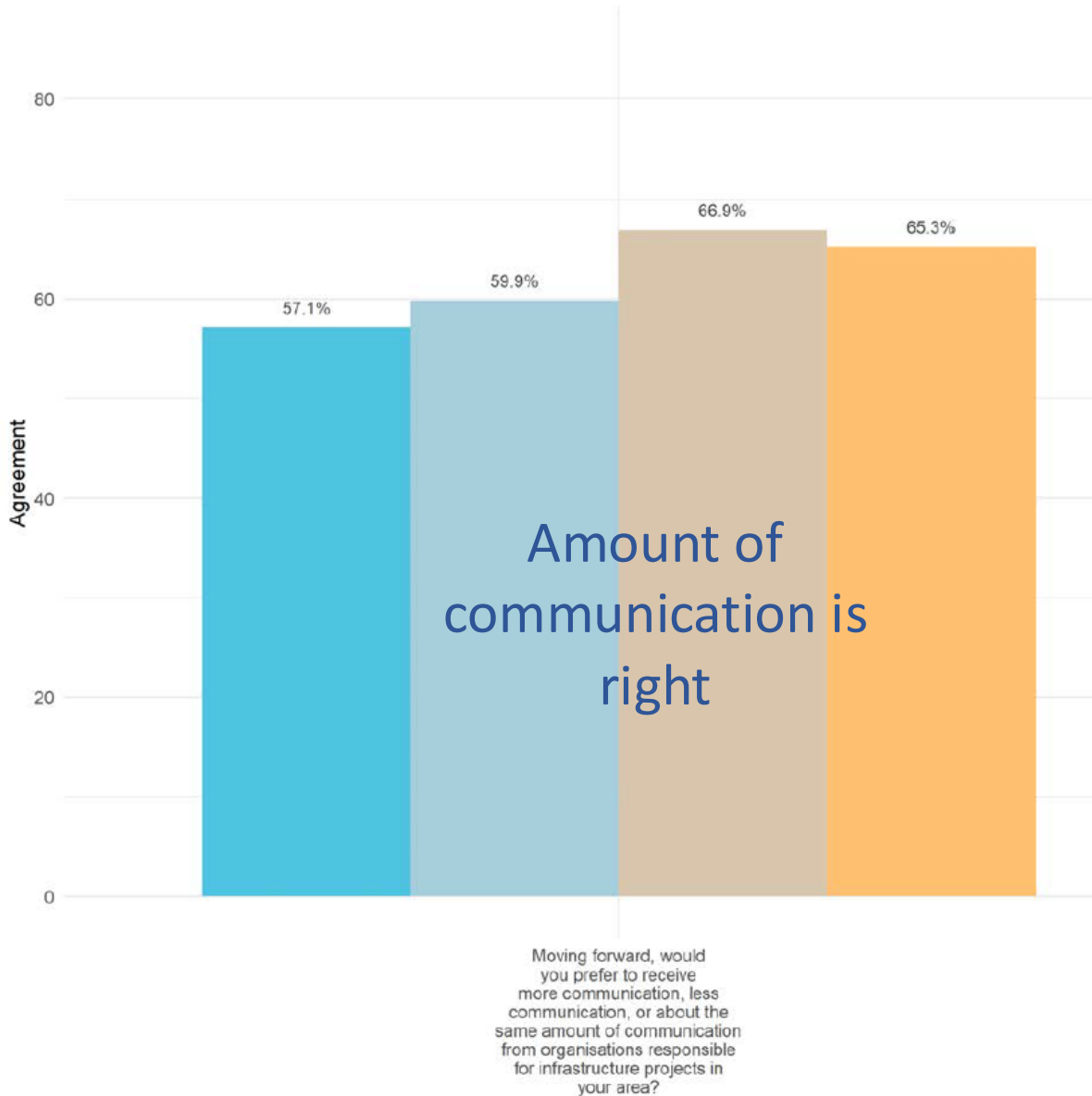
Amount of communication is right

Prefer to receive MORE communication

How many projects
- One
- Two or Three
- Four to Six
- Six or more

Left chart values: 57.1%, 59.9%, 66.9%, 65.3%

Moving forward, would you prefer to receive more communication, less communication, or about the same amount of communication from organisations responsible for infrastructure projects in your area?

Right chart values: 12.1%, 10.9%, 11.7%, 17.5%

In the last year, how much communication have the organisations responsible for infrastructure projects in your area had with you?

Disinformation is now part of the information landscape. By investing in relationship quality and building trust you can combat this issue.

New Research at I2S

DISINFORMATION IN THE CITY RESPONSE PLAYBOOK

IKA TRIJSBURG
HELEN SULLIVAN
ELISE PARK
MATTEO BONOTTI
PAUL COSTELLO
ZIM NWOKORA
DANIEL PEJIC
MARIO PEUCKER
WILLIAM RIDGE

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IDEAS LEADERSHIP HOPE

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Head of Democracy and Diplomacy | Municipal Association Victoria
Director Urban Analytics & Disinformation in the City Research Fellow |
ANU Institute for Infrastructure in Society

Prof Helen Sullivan, The Australian National University
A/Prof Zim Nwokora, Deakin University
A/Prof Matteo Bonotti, Monash University
A/Prof Mario Peucker, Victoria University
Paul Costello, German Marshall Fund of the United States

PRE-EMPTION AND EARLY DETECTION

- Understand the fault lines: Political, economic, urban/rural, social

- Existing disinformation narratives and themes

- Build trusted networks: Institutions, information, people, places

March 26, 2024, Francis Scott Key Bridge, Baltimore
Image credit: Harford County Md Fire & EMS PIO

PRE-BUNKING & SPREAD PREVENTION
- Activate relationships, provide accurate information and assist people to make sense of information they might receive
- Work with trusted and legitimate voices to minimize spread of disinformation

Image credit: AP

Image credit: AP

DE-BUNKING AND RECOVERY

- Accurate information and alternative narratives, extensive engagement
- Rebuild and establish trusted relationships, support impacted groups, address grievance narratives, build community

BEFORE
Pre-emption
and early detection

DURING
Spread prevention
and pre-bunking

AFTER
De-bunking
and recovery
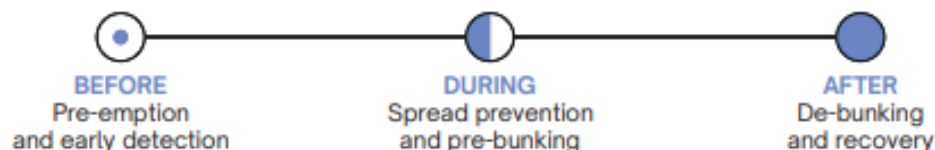
Community outreach programs.

Community outreach is an effective tool for reaching community where they are, including those not otherwise communicating with city governments. This enables cities to understand shifts in sentiment as they occur, the impacts on targeted communities, and assist in providing targeted supports and maintaining communication during and after disinformation-fueled events. Outreach should include groups prone to creating and sharing disinformation, and groups targeted.

Social media analysis.

Monitoring social media discourse is important for identifying disinformation both in relation to city initiatives and more broadly. It includes flagging specific content, terms and behaviours to identify and anticipate issues. Collaboration across sectors, levels and cities is particularly useful for providing real-time insights into trends and terms to flag.

Map the disinformer landscape.

Often disinformers use repeat tactics and narratives. They also often connect with known groups and platforms locally and globally. Proactively catalogue offenders, narratives and tactics to pre-empt future disinformation campaigns, understand who is involved, and who might be vulnerable to messaging.

Assemble advisors.

Assemble advisory bodies and brains trust early. Ensure this network of advisors is sufficient to inform your understanding of different communities and sectors across the city. Invest in the onboarding process to develop trusted relationships between advisors. Engage these groups to test information and see if they're appropriate and effective.

Increase frequency of messaging in the lead up to key events.

In the lead up to key events, such as policy decisions, key events or elections, increase communications around potential points.

Increase critical literacy.

Invest in education campaigns and opportunities, both within the organisation and in the community. This includes education-based programs and games-based platforms.

Be fun(ny) with it.

If done well, humour can be an effective tool for approaching sticky subjects. Humour can break down barriers, disarm tension, create connections, and be a memorable source of information. However, timing is critical. Humorously framed communication during crisis situations – even low-severity crises – has been shown to negatively impact trust in cities.

Fill the information vacuum.

Proactively and immediately provide people with clear, comprehensive and factual information – especially after key events. This reduces the risk that the information ecosystem becomes saturated with confusing, false and conspiratorial information.

De-platforming creators.

De-platforming is a tool used in attempt to limit the influence of disinformation campaigners. De-platforming is usually achieved by blocking a social media profile or banning disinformers from speaking in public forums.

Support those affected.

Provide psychologically safe spaces and services for communities affected by disinformation. These can be online and in person. Cities should also provide clear messaging to support targeted groups or individuals, to publicly demonstrate that it does not endorse harmful and false narratives.

Sticky facts & counter-information.

Use robust data and 'sticky facts' - simple, evidence-based content delivered in ways that people will remember to counter disinformation.

Providing counter-narratives.

Counter-narratives incorporate counter-information, but engage people through storytelling and personalisation. Counter-narratives can be more effective than simply presenting the facts because they engage people emotionally.

Key takeaways

- Know how impacted your host LGA is

- Know your social risks and look out for the 7 most impactful

- Invest time and resources to build a clear understanding of your host community – their values, priorities, needs and aspirations

- Build community capacity to participate fully in the consultation process, including through building technical literacy.

- Invest time and resources in building relationship quality

- Build trust through promise-keeping and transparency

Help us learn more about how misinformation and disinformation is affecting the energy transition.

State of Infrastructure and Engagement

2019-2020 | April 2021

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State of Infrastructure and Engagement – more than just a survey

Since 2018, the State of Infrastructure and Engagement Survey has collected two major sets of data:

Longitudinal Trend data: Questions investigating project status and experiences in the preceding year, with a focus on the main factors that influence delays or cancellations, social risk, community engagement and social licence to operate, as described by industry professionals.

Deep Dives: These questions focus on a major issue in the sector and interrogate the issue in depth to improve knowledge and pave the way for future research.

The 8th State of Infrastructure and Engagement – misinformation and disinformation deep dive

National Landholder + Community Engagement Training: Putting Collaboration in Action

Institute for Infrastructure in Society
infrastructure.anu.edu.au

October 2025
Dubbo, NSW.

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Questions:

1. **It seems that thorough community social due diligence at the outset of problem identification would be beneficial... really understanding the impacted community, levels of cohesion and where the fault lines are, as you so aptly put it.... Could you expand on that idea a little?**
2. Ika listening to the work, it strikes me that many of the principles embedded in the I2S Infrastructure Engagement Excellence Standards would be helpful in terms of dealing with disinformation... in particular, understanding your community and stakeholders, matching information to their needs and capacity and being transparent .... What are your thoughts about the importance of quality community engagement in combatting disinformation?
3. **Finally, before I ask the audience to join in with their questions your work to date has centred on cities, do you have any thoughts about the applicability of this work to regional areas?**