

Mapping Purpose and People

Purpose: To help organisations identify their purpose behind child engagement (the 'why') and the people who may need to be involved (the 'who').

Start by thinking about a specific, real-world project, program, or idea from your own work.

Your **range of purposes** might include:

- (Re)designing and planning a program activity
- Evaluating a service or program
- Developing a joint initiative

Ask yourself:

- Are we engaging children to gather their ideas?
- Are we aiming to empower children?
- Are we ticking a box for a funder?
- How do we hope and/or need to use what children tell us?

Clarifying your purpose helps ensure that the engagement is **focused**, **authentic**, and **aligned with outcomes** that matter to children.

Next, consider **who needs to be involved** to support meaningful engagement. This includes:

- Children themselves, especially those with lived experience relevant to the topic
- Trusted adults who have strong relationships with children (e.g., educators, youth workers)
- Cultural or community leaders, especially when working with First Nations children or other culturally diverse groups
- Non-traditional actors who may have influence or insight but aren't typically included

Ask:

- Who already has a trusted relationship with the children we want to engage?
- Is our Community Partner involved – and how?
- Who do we involve and why?

This step encourages you to think about the **sphere of influence** and how to build on existing relationships to create meaningful, safe and respectful engagement.

Additional pragmatic questions

The 'why'	Why are we engaging children?
The 'what'	What change are we hoping to achieve through child engagement? What will we do to facilitate meaningful engagement with children? What relationships (direct or indirect) do we have with children? What engagement methods are most appropriate for the age, culture and context of the children involved?
The 'who'	Who do we involve? Who are the trusted adults or intermediaries who can support safe and respectful engagement with children?
The 'how'	How will we ensure children understand the purpose of their involvement? How will we create culturally safe and inclusive spaces for engagement? How will we communicate back with children about what was done with their input? How will we foster meaningful relationships among those involved? How will we implement the consultation? How will we document and evaluate the impact of the engagement?
The 'where'	Where will the engagement take place, and is it safe for children? Where will people feel most comfortable and relaxed? Where do children feel a sense of belonging and cultural safety? Where can activities be set up to suit different engagement styles?