

COMMUNITIES EXPECT COORDINATED ENGAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS



SCAN CARD · 06

DESCRIPTION

Community organisations are involved in multiple university engagement projects at the same time. While engagement brings opportunities, it also requires time, coordination and emotional labour. Many community actors report 'engagement fatigue' — repeated consultations, pilot projects and short-term collaborations that don't lead to lasting change.

Universities often approach the same communities independently, without coordination. Trust may erode and communities become reluctant to participate. This pattern is likely to intensify as engagement expectations increase, further concentrating demands on a limited number of community actors.

RELEVANCE

This trend highlights the uneven distribution of costs and benefits in community engagement. While universities gain learning, data and visibility, communities may experience overload.

If not addressed, engagement fatigue can undermine long-term partnerships and create resistance to future collaboration.

NEED

Universities need better coordination of engagement activities and clearer communication with community partners. Long-term partnerships should replace isolated, project-based interactions.

There is also a need for recognition and compensation of community contributions, and mechanisms to listen to community capacities. Without this, engagement fatigue may lead to declining participation, reduced trust and the disengagement of key community partners.

CATEGORY

Social · Ethical

SIGNAL STRENGTH

Medium



SCANNING METHOD

Literature · Stakeholder feedback

SOURCES

National Task Force (2012) Democratic Engagement · Farnell (2020) NESET Report · Gifford et al. (2025) Equitable Partnerships · Meerman & Davey (2025) UIIN Reimagining Engagement