

# STAYING CONNECTED

Engaging Effectively Online



# RESPONDING TO COVID-19

These are uncertain times. While public health must be our number one priority in the midst of this pandemic, it's vital that we continue to keep local communities engaged in the strategic projects that will drive our economic and cultural recovery.

To do this, we're adapting the way we work and how we engage to keep critical projects moving. We're rethinking how engagement should operate in a 'fully online' environment and developing new tools and strategies to ensure this can be just as successful as a 'real' workshop.

New technology can be daunting at the best of times. With so many different online engagement platforms available, it can be overwhelming to know where to start and what tools are best suited to particular projects.

We hope this guide helps to ease this transition and make your virtual engagement a success. While challenging, adapting to COVID-19 is an opportunity to innovate and revolutionise the way we engage with our community and stakeholders both now and in the future.

## 5 REASONS TO START YOUR ENGAGEMENT PROJECT TODAY

### Captive Audience

Never again will we be so well-placed to reach so many people who are keen to connect and have the 'free time' to be more engaged with local issues.

### License to Experiment

Millions of Australians are currently trialling new online platforms from their homes and workplaces. People young and old are primed to participate in bold and experimental consultation methods.

### Fresh Perspectives

Online engagement makes it easier to tap into the fresh ideas and out-of-the box thinking of those 'hard-to-reach' audiences who rarely show up to traditional workshops due to other commitments.

### New Conversations

Freed from the resourcing limitations of face-to-face engagement, we can talk in-depth with small groups and individuals. Recording, uploading and sharing media also adds a valuable new dimension.

### Stimulus Ready

The aftermath of COVID-19 is likely to bring a range of stimulus packages. Now is the ideal time to align local communities through engagement to prepare 'shovel' ready projects.

# ONLINE THINKING

Genuine collaboration is central to all that we do at RobertsDay. While COVID-19 will change how engagement is delivered, it will not change the values and principles of our approach or the award-winning results we're so proud to achieve for our clients.

Our approach to community engagement, regardless of format, is all about connecting with people to share knowledge and shape places through inventive design and placemaking.

Amidst the countless webinar platforms and other digital engagement tools in the marketplace, we believe that all effective online engagement should follow four simple principles:

## **Keep it Simple**

Online engagement needs to be as straightforward as possible to include people of all ages and abilities. While there are many complex web platforms out there making big promises, stick to the basics and keep it as low-tech as possible.

## **Talk With (Not At)**

One-sided conversations through webinars and pre-recorded videos alone will not deliver meaningful outcomes. Using technology to facilitate genuine conversations with and between stakeholders is a must.

## **Build Relationships**

Get to know stakeholders through fun online warm-ups and by establishing ongoing conversations beyond scheduled link-ups to compensate for a lack of 'face time'.

## **Design Together**

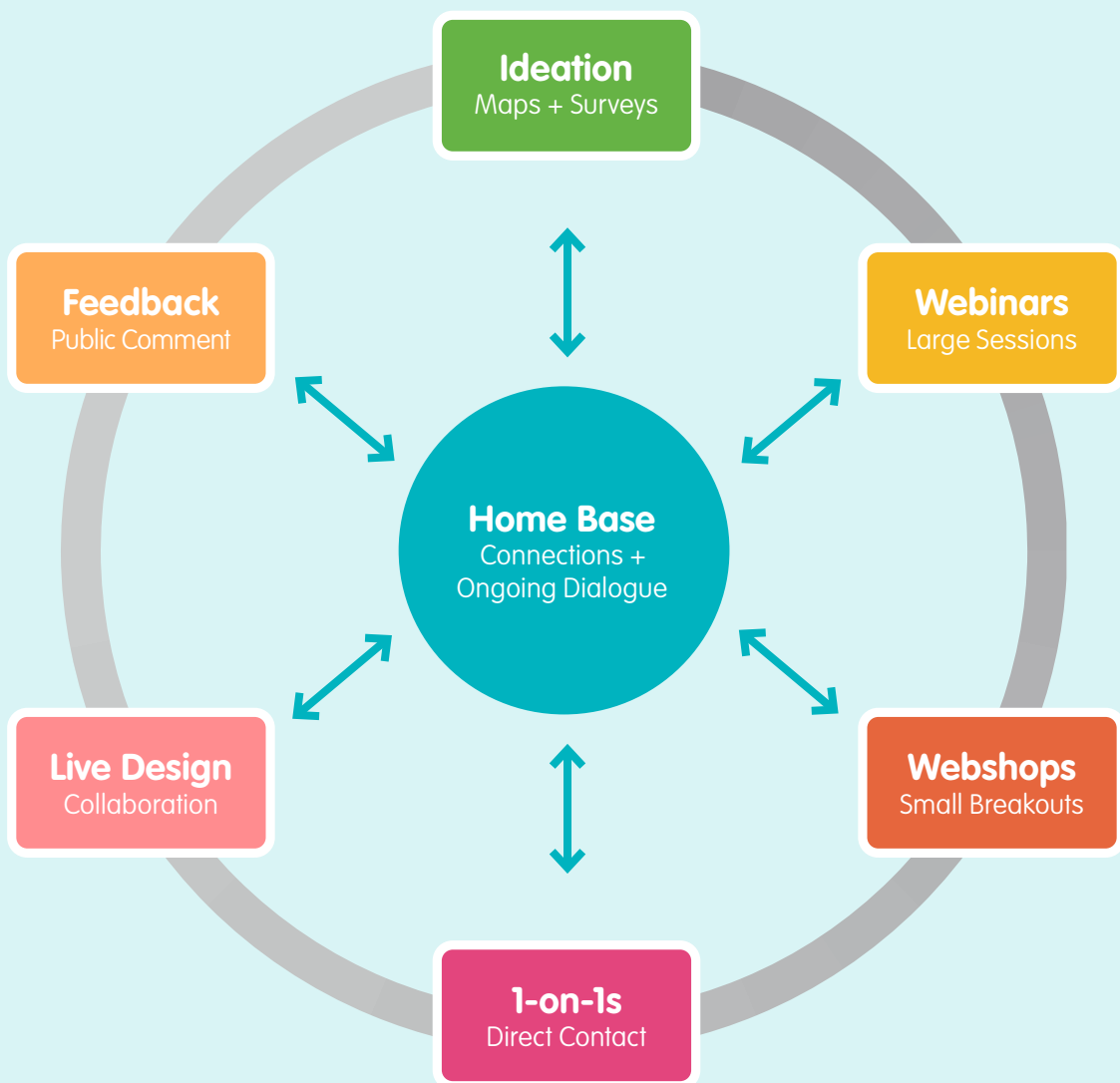
Move beyond online talkfests to engage meaningfully with design concepts through select use of collaboration tools and 3D platforms that deliver authentic participation in the design process.



# WHAT WE RECOMMEND

We've developed and tested a range of platforms, tools and techniques to enable our clients to keep projects on track while being confident that key stakeholders will be meaningfully engaged and involved. Please get in touch to find out more about these techniques and the specific platforms and technologies we recommend.

While it may be different to what we're all used to, in many ways fully online engagement can provide a richer environment that affords more time to listen and seek considered and specific feedback from groups and individuals.



## 1. Home Base

Establish a central project hub for information sharing, scheduling online sessions and to provide a place where the conversation to maintain project momentum. *Use instead of community halls and workshops as an extension of your usual project webpage.*

## 2. Ideation

Reach a diverse audience and gather high-level input through established Digital Tools, such as Online Surveys, Place Mapping and Ideas Boards. *Use instead of inception workshops, physical surveys or visioning workshops.*

## 3. Webinars

Engage large groups with virtual presentations and gather live feedback through polls and facilitated Q&As, recording and replaying these sessions to reach a broader audience if required. *Use instead of large workshops and meetings.*

## 4. Webshops

Recreate focused table exercises and discussions tailored to smaller groups, with supplementary tools such as brainstorming, virtual 'sticky-notes' and offline worksheets. *Use instead of workshop breakout sessions and Community Reference Group meetings.*

## 5. 1-on-1s

Leverage the advantages of online engagement to run rapid one-on-one interviews with individuals and small groups, collecting detailed and nuanced input about specific issues. *Use instead of stakeholder meetings, listening posts and open houses.*

## 6. Live Design

Use streamed digital sketches, collaborative annotating, interactive 3D models and offline homework to gather intuitive feedback on design concepts and show how this feedback informs design over time. *Use instead of PDFs/charrettes, co-design workshops.*

## 7. Feedback

Close the loop and lock in outcomes through webinars, tailored feedback forms and pre-recorded presentations, or consider innovative alternatives such as 3D flythroughs and virtual reality. *Use instead of listening posts, community feedback sessions and open houses.*

# USER EXPERIENCE



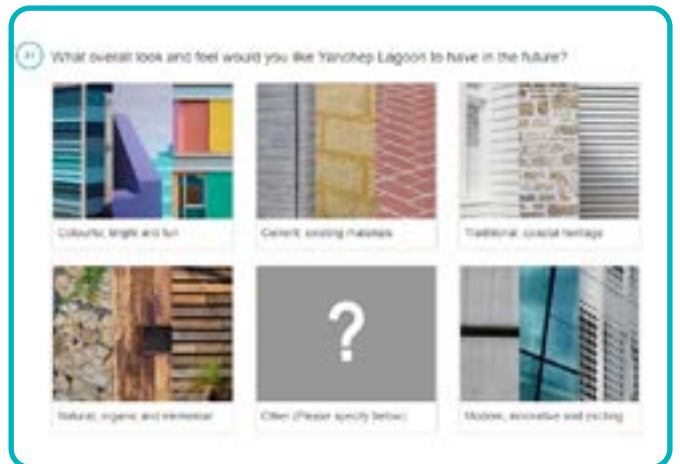
**Ideas Map** Platform: SocialPinpoint



**Project Website** Platform: Wordpress



**Web Workshop** Platform: Zoom



**Online Survey** Platform: SurveyMonkey



**Webinar** Platform: Recording



**Design Collaboration** Platform: Whiteboard



# CONTACT

Reach out to your local RobertsDay studio to learn more about how we can help to achieve your engagement goals.



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