



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Engaging Effectively with Local Businesses to Boost High Street Regeneration

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Who Are Local Businesses?

- Sole traders to multinationals.
- Owners to branch managers.
- Long history to relative newcomers.
- Retailers to service providers.
- A diverse mix of size, sector, type & age.





Why Engage With Businesses?

- Lifeblood of the community.
- Owners and employees who live & work in the local area.
- Contributors & beneficiaries of local economic growth.
- Resourceful & creative.
- Key partners investing in places.





When To Engage With Businesses?

- Engage early, engage often.
- Planning - to shape town visions & strategies.
- Design - to develop concepts into deliverable projects.
- Delivery - to problem solve and disseminate progress.
- Evaluation - to offer feedback.





9 Practical Ideas

1. Collaboration with business organisations.
2. Building an ambassador network.
3. Driving advocacy.
4. Customer communication.
5. Cluster conversations.
6. Employee engagement.
7. Leveraging local media.
8. Working with supply chains.
9. Telling your story to businesses.

Source: [Townsfund.org.uk](https://www.townsfund.org.uk)



1. Collaboration with business organisations

- LEPs, Chambers of Commerce, BIDs.
- FSB, CBI, Business in the Community & others.
- Broadly represent members' views.
- Reach large numbers of businesses.





2. Building networks

- Bring together businesses with shared interests in the place.
- Promote exchange of information & experiences.
- Develop a two-way forum to discuss emerging plans or a focus group to test ideas.
- Improve communication of business priorities & concerns.





3. Driving advocacy

- Champions will emerge from engagement activities.
- High-profile & well-regarded individuals giving voice to needs & aspirations of businesses.
- Influencers who can work with local government and ensure a business perspective is wired in to all stages of development.





4. Customer communication

- Extending the reach of engagement.
- Multiple channels: digital & face-to-face.
- Local shopping centres, sports clubs or cinemas attract footfall & opportunities to engage.
- Partnering with familiar, trusted sources to get information out.





5. Cluster conversations

- Identifying clusters of businesses working in the same sector or location.
- Opportunities to engage through sector events (e.g. tourism).
- Or tenants meetings in shopping centres, or enterprise centres, or with business park BIDs.
- Engaging with several businesses at once.





6. Engaging employees

- Extending the reach beyond business owners & senior managers
- Opportunities to find out what employees think.
- Firms may share literature and survey forms through internal communications (e.g. intranet & newsletters).





7. Leveraging local media

- Develop relationships with local & regional broadcasters to help convey key messages & publicise events.
- Share interesting stories with local press to raise awareness of aims & achievements.
- Proactively engage with online news sites & digital platforms.





8. Working with supply chains

- Many businesses will be suppliers to other businesses.
- In towns with 1 or 2 dominant employers there may be opportunities through them to engage with business suppliers.
- Developing relationships may also reveal plans for business growth including relocation & expansion.





9. Telling your story

- Explain the value of what you are doing.
- Make it relevant to each business.
- Build trust by being honest about current situation and positive about the future.
- Encourage them to be a part of plans for your town & high street.
- Securing buy-in is so important.





Summing up

- Businesses come in many forms.
- Adopt a multi-channel approach.
- Tailor the methods used to suit characteristics of the business.
- Build relationships & trust with people running businesses.
- Be prepared for those who don't want to know and objectors.
- Remain positive throughout.

