



# Top 5 tips for community engagement

For cultural heritage professionals in operational roles

## 1 - Do your research before engaging

Leverage available resources and conduct research to ease the burden on the community. If you intend to co-create or co-curate descriptions and stories, ensure you know what your institution's collection management system supports and whether your ICT team (or provider) can accommodate potentially required workflow changes. It is important that the community you engage with don't have to do all the work of educating and that you can be clear from the start as to how their input will be recorded and used.

## 2 - Let go of assumptions and stay flexible

Don't assume you know how the community or individual members will react and avoid coming in with a rigid plan or predetermined outcomes. Instead, let the community take the lead, be open to what naturally unfolds, listen actively to their needs and feedback. Maintain an openness in your approach and adapt and evolve with the feedback received.

## 3 - Work with a trusted community member or ally

If possible, co-facilitate your engagement activities with someone from the community to guide your approach and to build and strengthen trust. This will help in ensuring a warm and safe space for discussions and critical reflection, in which the group can take the lead and where there is room for emotions to be openly expressed.

## 4 - Allow for diversity within the group

Remember that a community is not a homogeneous group of people. Each community member's understanding of his, her, or their own identity is shaped by the prevailing values and attitudes not only at the community level, but also at a personal level. Make sure to bring together community members of different ages, genders, backgrounds and experiences.

## 5 - Make the first step

Meaningful engagement takes time and resources from everyone involved. However, small and incremental steps are still progress and better than doing nothing at all.

Read more on the [DE-BIAS project's experience with community engagement](#).