The Alan Turing Institute

Public Voices in AI Process Guide

A practical guide to key considerations in the lifecycle of public voice projects



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The Alan Turing Institute

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Background

This resource was developed as part of a RAI UK funded research project on Public Voices in AI (PVAI). Public Voices in AI was a year-long (2024-25) research project that aimed to ensure that public voices are attended to in artificial intelligence (AI) research, development, deployment and policy (AI RDD&P). It synthesised, reviewed, built and shared knowledge about public views on AI and engaging diverse publics in AI RDD&P, with and in consultation with target beneficiaries working in (responsible) AI and members of the public, especially from groups most negatively affected by and underrepresented in AI.

This resource was developed in Work Package 4 of PVAI, conducted by researchers at The Alan Turing Institute, which evaluated current public voice methods, their impacts and challenges, and identified gaps where further support or resources may be needed.

The research was undertaken through a mapping study of existing public voice activities relating to AI in the UK; interviews with facilitators and organisers of public voice activities; interviews with members of the public with experience of taking part in public voice activities, and; workshops with researchers and practitioners to co-develop the resources produced.[1]

Why a process guide?

The research that led to the development of this guide, was focused on evaluating current public voice methods, their impacts and challenges, and identifying gaps where further support or resources may be needed. The research consisted of a mapping study of current and recent public voice activities relating to AI[2], interviews with 21 researchers, practitioners and members of the public with experience of delivering, or participating in public voice activities relating to AI, and a series of three workshops which brought together researchers and practitioners with experience of organising or delivering public involvement and engagement relating to AI, to co-design resources.

Through this research we developed a set of resources to support wider best practice in this important area. This guide forms one part of these resources. Alongside this,

[1] The full findings from these interviews and workshops will be published in a forthcoming paper.

[2] Mahomed, S., Jayadeva, S., Aitken, M., Thomas, C. A., & Hadjiloizou, S. (2025). Public Voices in AI: Repository of Use Cases Report. The Alan Turing Institute.

and in response to needs expressed by participants in our interviews and workshops, we have also developed a repository of use cases showcasing recent examples of public voice activities relating to AI in the UK[3], and a set of introductory resources to support public conversations on AI.[4]

A key finding from the interviews and workshops was that people with experience of delivering public voice methods largely felt confident about selecting, designing and delivering methods for engaging the public, but noted that significant challenges were often encountered in the wider lifecycle of public voice activities (i.e. before or after the main engagement activities). Additionally, participants in the research indicated that there are existing resources and toolkits providing helpful guidance on participatory engagement methods, but less support in relation to wider process considerations.

Therefore, this guide aims to address considerations throughout the entire lifecycle of public voice projects. Recognising that a wide range of toolkits and guidance already exist relating to participatory methods and public engagement (not necessarily specific to AI), the guide points to existing resources and guidance relevant to each process stage.

How we hope this guide will be used

We hope this guide will be useful for individuals and organisations planning and delivering public voice activities relating to AI, by providing a practical guide to key stages in the lifecycle of public voice activities.

This guide highlights key considerations to be addressed at each stage and should be used as a reflective guide to support in the planning, delivery and evaluation of public voice activities.

We also hope that the process guide may be helpful for members of the public participating in – or invited to participate in – public voice activities in understanding the range of factors and considerations that shape the design, delivery and outcomes of public voice activities.

The guide begins by outlining the key stages in the lifecycle of public voice projects, it then outlines key actions and considerations to be addressed at each stage and indicates further resources which can provide additional guidance in relation to each stage. Finally, the guide provides a checklist of key considerations to address throughout the lifecycle of public voice projects – this is intended to be used as a tool to guide decision-making and reflection throughout the process.

The items covered on the checklist also represent considerations which it will be important to communicate to public participants in order to ensure transparency about

[3] Mahomed, S., Jayadeva, S., Aitken, M., Thomas, C. A., & Hadjiloizou, S. (2025). Public Voices in AI: Repository of Use Cases Report. The Alan Turing Institute https://digitalgood.net/dg-outputs/resources-for-including-the-public-in-ai/

[4] Aitken, M., Mahomed, S. & Jayadeva, S. 2025, Introductory Resources for Public Conversations about AI, The Alan Turing Institute https://digitalgood.net/dg-outputs/resources-for-including-the-public-in-ai/

the objectives, approach, (intended and actual) outcomes and impacts, and the choices that have informed each of these.

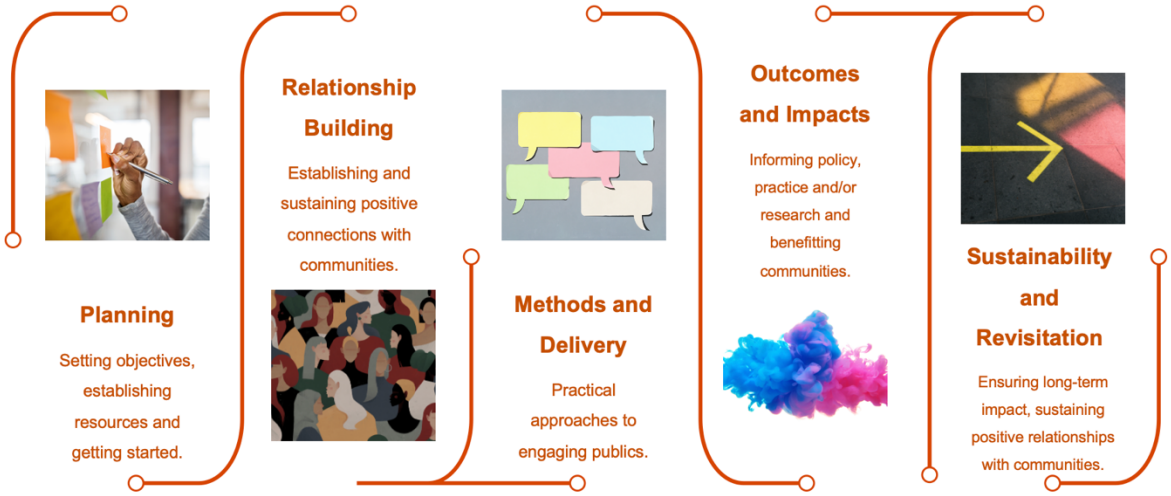
We recommend using this guide alongside the Framework for Including Public Voices in AI, developed by Reema Patel[5], which provides a rich discussion of rationales underpinning approaches to including public voices in AI research, development or policy, and practical guidance on designing, conducting and evaluating engagement projects.

[5] Patel, R. (2025) *A Framework and Self Assessment Workbook for Including Public Voices in AI*. Elgon Social Research and ESRC Digital Good Network. Available at: https://elgon.social/2025/03/13/a-framework-and-self-assessment-workbook-for-including-public-voices-in-ai/

Overview of Process Stages

This guide covers key considerations and actions to be taken throughout the lifecycle of public voice projects. It structures the process around five stages:

1. Planning
2. Relationship Building
3. Methods and Delivery
4. Outcomes and Impacts
5. Sustainability and Revisitation



While this guide addresses each of these stages in sequence, it is recognised that in reality the processes are typically fluid, iterative and not always linear. In particular, Relationship Building underpins activities in all stages, and decisions made in the Planning stage will need to be revisited and often adapted throughout the process. Therefore, while the following sections set out key actions and considerations in each of these stages, it will be necessary to address many of the process considerations at various points in the lifecycle of public voice activities.

Spotlight on Planning



Planning is the first phase in the lifecycle of public voice projects, but this is also continuous and ongoing. Many of the choices and actions taken in this stage will need to be revisited throughout the process. In this phase key decisions are made about the purpose, approach and scope of the public voice activity, as well as which publics are going to be engaged.

Actions	Considerations
• Secure funding • Establish project team • Establish an engagement objective • Select appropriate methods • Identify publics to engage • Develop a strategy for reaching the communities you aim to engage • Identify potential risks in the project and strategies to mitigate these • Undertake ethical review of the project • Undertake a data protection impact assessment, and equalities impact assessment for the project, if required	• What are the resource constraints that may impact the project? • Does the team have adequate and appropriate expertise and experience? If not, will gaps be addressed through training, recruitment or collaboration? • What do you aim to influence or change through the project, and what mechanisms need to be in place to achieve this? • Will online, offline or hybrid approaches be most appropriate for the communities you aim to engage? • Will it be appropriate to use AI tools in the design or delivery of the project? If these are to be used, have all team members been briefed on responsible use of AI (particularly generative AI)?

• Build in time for documentation processes and potential delays in approvals processes • Develop a plan for evaluating the project • Develop a plan for achieving and communicating impacts and outcomes	• Is funding in place to cover activities relating to disseminating outputs and realising impact? • Who will evaluate the project, and how? • What would it mean for this project to be successful?

Further Resources:

- Public Voices in AI Self-Assessment Workbook: Patel, R. (2025) *A Framework and Self Assessment Workbook for Including Public Voices in AI*. Elgon Social Research and ESRC Digital Good Network. Available at: https://elgon.social/2025/03/13/a-framework-and-self-assessment-workbook-for-including-public-voices-in-ai/
- NCCPE's Guide to developing high quality public engagement: https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/resources/guide/quick-guide-developing-high-quality-public-engagement
- What Works Scotland Guide to designing and planning public engagement: https://policyscotland.gla.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/WWSPublicEngagementHandbook.pdf
- NCCPE's Guide to Evaluation: https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/resources/tutorials/evaluation-101

Spotlight on Relationship Building



Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with the communities and groups that you plan to engage is essential to the success of public voice projects. While this is presented as phase two in this lifecycle, relationship building – and maintaining relationships – is pivotal throughout all phases.

In some instances relationship building will be phase one, as it may be existing relationships with, or within, communities that lead to initial project inception and planning. However, in other instances (for example where a public voice project is designed and initiated by an organisation external to the communities to be engaged) relationships need to be established within the lifetime of the project.

Actions	Considerations
• Identify existing relationships with relevant community groups • Where existing relationships are not in place, establish connections via charities or community groups • Identify potential risks for members of the public taking part, and strategies to mitigate these • Involve participants - or representatives of relevant communities – in the design of methods and approaches to be used • Understand priorities, interests and needs of particular groups • Communicate clearly and transparently about objectives and plans, and be open to	• To what extent does the project team contain a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds to reflect or understand the experiences and needs of the communities you aim to engage? (Positionality Reflection) • How might approaches need to be adapted to reach underserved or marginalized groups? • How can previously underrepresented groups be included in the design and evaluation of the project? • In what ways will public participants, and their communities, benefit from this project, and how can these benefits be maximised? • In what ways does AI already impact the communities you aim to

revising these in response to feedback • Facilitate open channels of communication, answer questions, provide feedback and be open to criticism	engage, and how will these impacts be addressed in the engagement activities?

Further Resources

- A practical guide to Positionality Reflection: https://aiethics.turing.ac.uk/modules/sustainability-1/?modulepage=positionality-reflection
- NIHR's Guide to Creating Inclusive Content and Language: https://www.learningforinvolvement.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/A-guide-to-creating-inclusive-content-and-language.pdf
- Public Voices in AI Self-Assessment Workbook: Patel, R. (2025) *A Framework and Self Assessment Workbook for Including Public Voices in AI*. Elgon Social Research and ESRC Digital Good Network. Available at: https://elgon.social/2025/03/13/a-framework-and-self-assessment-workbook-for-including-public-voices-in-ai/

Spotlight on Methods and Delivery



Methods and delivery relates to the direct engagement with members of the public and community groups. This can take many different forms reflecting decisions made in the planning phase.

This section aims to highlight key considerations and processes that should be addressed in this phase but it does not provide guidance on potential methods. For guidance on selecting relevant engagement methods please refer to the further resources listed below.

Actions	Considerations
• Identify and accommodate accessibility needs of participants • Select venues that are accessible and comfortable • Draw on existing guidance and toolkits on participatory methods • Ensure participants give informed consent to participate. This requires providing clear and accessible information about the project, its funding, aims and expected outcomes, as well as about the ways data will be collected, stored and used. Allow adequate time for questions. • Involve participants in designing and adapting methods and approach	• What would be a comfortable and accessible venue for the groups you plan to engage? • What accessibility needs do participants have (e.g. translator, sign language, step-free access, large print materials)? • Are online, offline or hybrid approaches most appropriate for the communities you are engaging? • How might approaches need to be adapted to reach underserved or marginalized groups? • What opportunities are there for participants to provide feedback and suggest changes to the methods and approach? • What levels of knowledge/interest do participants have about AI?

• Invite and address feedback from participants throughout the process • Ensure participants are compensated adequately for their time • Provide catering and expenses	• What do participants need to know about AI in order to take part in the activities, and how can this information be most effectively communicated? • What start and end times would be most convenient for participants? • What dietary requirements do participants have? • Housekeeping: have you informed participants where restrooms and/or prayer rooms are and is there signage? • Is there a first aid kit on site?

Further Resources

- For guidance on a wide range of engagement methods, including practical considerations see Involve's methods resources: https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/methods
- Alan Turing Institute guidance on selecting methods in relation to different engagement objectives: https://aiethics.turing.ac.uk/modules/sustainability-1/?modulepage=stakeholder-engagement
- Introductory materials for public conversations about AI: this powerpoint slide deck has been developed to be used, or adapted, by anyone to provide an introduction to AI: https://digitalgood.net/dg-outputs/resources-for-including-the-public-in-ai/
- Repository of uses cases showing recent projects that have engaged the public on the topic of AI (in the UK): https://airtable.com/appSVJIBbdIjDtJz1/shrcreWnmFE9FBrdk
- Public Voices in AI Self-Assessment Workbook: Patel, R. (2025) *A Framework and Self Assessment Workbook for Including Public Voices in AI*. Elgon Social Research and ESRC Digital Good Network. Available at: https://elgon.social/2025/03/13/a-framework-and-self-assessment-workbook-for-including-public-voices-in-ai/

Spotlight on Outcomes and Impact



Public voice activities should be designed to produce impact and effect change. This could be achieved in many different ways, for example informing policy, changing the way AI systems are developed or used, shaping the design of future research, strengthening connections within communities or improving public understandings of AI.

In the planning phase an engagement objective will have been decided, this should identify intended outcomes and impacts from the engagement activities and mechanisms in place to realise this. Throughout the lifetime of the project the intended outcomes and impacts might adapt and change in response to the process or the ideas and experiences discussed by public participants, and the engagement objective should be updated accordingly.

Actions	Considerations
• Plan for impact from the beginning but adapt approaches as needed • Establish relationships with stakeholders you aim to influence • Identify which stakeholders may be most impacted by the outcomes of your project • Produce clear recommendations or action points, relevant to the stakeholders you aim to influence • Develop and implement a communications plan with a strategy to reach target audiences • Produce accessible outputs aimed at particular audiences	• What barriers or challenges might limit the impact of your project? How could these be addressed? • Where existing relationships with key stakeholders are not established, which organisations or individuals might act as gatekeepers? • What are current areas of policy interest that your outcomes might relate to? • What are the priorities and interests of the stakeholders you aim to influence, and how do your outcomes relate to these?

• Involve public participants in communicating and sharing outputs • Communicate outcomes and impacts to all participants	• Is follow-on funding needed to support work aimed at maximising impact? • Will you need additional resources to support communication activities (e.g. developing a website)?

Further Resources

- Fast Track Impact tools and templates for planning and tracking impact: https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/i-want-to-plan-my-impact
- UCL Guide on Informing Public Policy: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-policy/sites/public_policy_redesign/files/ucl_public_policy_handbook_final.pdf

Spotlight on Sustainability and Revisitation



Public voice activities should not be used to extract value from communities but rather should be designed to create lasting benefits. Public voice activities should be designed to facilitate ongoing and lasting relationships with communities which empower members of the public to have a voice in matters that affect their lives. As such it is important to plan for approaches that will sustain relationships over time and enable ongoing engagement and impact. This might mean continuous engagement, or alternatively revisitation at regular intervals or in response to key developments (e.g. policy changes, design of new research or development of a new AI system).

Actions	Considerations
• Secure funding to support sustainability of engagement • Maintain relationships with public participants through communication about outcomes, impacts and opportunities for further engagement • Aim for engagement to be continuous and ongoing • Identify and respond to priorities and interests of the publics engaged • Involve participants in shaping future engagement activities and setting priorities for future work • Build capacity within communities to lead public voice activities	• What barriers might there be to sustainability of engagement? How can these be addressed? • What are public participants' priorities for future engagement? • What is needed to ensure sustainability and continuity of staff within the project team? • How might evidence of impact from the activities support proposals for future work? • What might be needed to support community members to run and sustain public voice activities themselves?

Further Resources

- NCCPE's Guide to Evaluation: https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/resources/tutorials/evaluation-101
- Public Voices in AI Self-Assessment Workbook: Patel, R. (2025) *A Framework and Self Assessment Workbook for Including Public Voices in AI*. Elgon Social Research and ESRC Digital Good Network. Available at: https://elgon.social/2025/03/13/a-framework-and-self-assessment-workbook-for-including-public-voices-in-ai/

Summary of Key Actions throughout the Engagement Process

Planning

- Secure funding
- Establish project team
- Establish an engagement objective
- Select appropriate methods
- Identify publics to engage
- Develop a strategy for reaching the communities you aim to engage
- Identify potential risks in the project and strategies to mitigate these
- Undertake ethical review of the project
- Undertake a data protection impact assessment, and equalities impact assessment for the project, if required
- Build in time for documentation processes and potential delays in approvals processes
- Develop a plan for evaluating the project
- Develop a plan for achieving and communicating impacts and outcomes

Relationship Building

- Identify existing relationships with relevant community groups
- Where existing relationships are not in place, establish connections via charities or community groups
- Identify potential risks for members of the public taking part, and strategies to mitigate these
- Involve participants - or representatives of relevant communities – in the design of methods and approaches to be used
- Understand priorities, interests and needs of particular groups
- Communicate clearly and transparently about objectives and plans, and be open to revising these in response to feedback
- Facilitate open channels of communication, answer questions, provide feedback and be open to criticism

Methods and Delivery

- Identify and accommodate accessibility needs of participants
- Select venues that are accessible and comfortable
- Draw on existing guidance and toolkits on participatory methods
- Ensure participants give informed consent to participate. This requires providing clear and accessible information about the project, its funding, aims and expected outcomes, as well as about the ways data will be collected, stored and used. Allow adequate time for questions.
- Involve participants in designing and adapting methods and approach
- Invite and address feedback from participants throughout the process
- Ensure participants are compensated adequately for their time
- Provide catering and expenses

Impacts and Outcomes

- Plan for impact from the beginning but adapt approaches as needed
- Establish relationships with stakeholders you aim to influence
- Identify which stakeholders may be most impacted by the outcomes of your project
- Produce clear recommendations or action points, relevant to the stakeholders you aim to influence
- Develop and implement a communications plan with a strategy to reach target audiences
- Produce accessible outputs aimed at particular audiences
- Involve public participants in communicating and sharing outputs
- Communicate outcomes and impacts to all participants

Sustainability and Revisitation

- Secure funding to support sustainability of engagement
- Maintain relationships with public participants through communication about outcomes, impacts and opportunities for further engagement
- Aim for engagement to be continuous and ongoing
- Identify and respond to priorities and interests of the publics engaged
- Involve participants in shaping future engagement activities and setting priorities for future work
- Build capacity within communities to lead public voice activities

Additional Considerations relating to AI as the Focus of Engagement

While the methods used to engage the public in relation to AI may not be different from those used in relation to other topics, there are some features of AI that raise particular considerations.

Participants in our research noted a range of challenges encountered in public engagement with AI. Notably, there is no single, universally agreed upon definition of what AI is. Moreover, the term AI refers a large range of systems and tools that can be used for a very wide array of tasks and functions, including spam filters for emails, imaging tools used to detect cancer, smart assistants like Alexa or Siri, autonomous vehicles, and facial recognition technologies used by police and immigration control. This means that many different things might come to mind when introducing the topic of AI, and it will rarely be feasible or desirable to cover all dimensions of AI in public engagement activities. An additional challenge relates to the pace at which AI technologies are developing, with rapid advances in both capabilities and applications. This can make it challenging to ensure that public discussions on AI are up to date.

In this section we set out some key actions and considerations aimed at addressing these challenges.

Actions	Considerations
• Define which form(s) and/or application(s) of AI your public voice activity is focussing on • Begin by finding out what participants currently know about AI, and what their experiences with AI have been • Dispel myths and misconceptions about AI with clear explanations of its capabilities and limitations • Focus on examples that are relevant and meaningful to	• What aspects of AI are most relevant for the focus of this public voice activity? • What aspects or uses of AI will be most relevant for the communities you are engaging? • What level(s) of exposure will participants have had to AI tools? Are there likely to be varied levels of familiarity/ experience within the group? How might this affect the engagement activities?

participants' lives and communities • Don't pretend to have all the answers when difficult questions are asked about AI – but seek to find out together with participants • Recognise and emphasise that you do not need to understand all the technical dimensions about how an AI system works in order to understand its impacts, or to have valid views on the ways it is developed and used	• Are participants likely to have experienced negative impacts of AI (e.g. racially minoritised groups)? How might this impact engagement processes? And, how can you ensure participants can safely discuss the impacts of AI without needing to disclose personal experiences?

Further Resources

- Introductory materials for public conversations about AI: this powerpoint slide deck has been developed to be used, or adapted, by anyone to provide an introduction to AI: https://digitalgood.net/dg-outputs/resources-for-including-the-public-in-ai/

Checklist of Key Considerations to Address

Planning

Have you considered:

- ☐ What are the resource constraints that may impact the project?
- ☐ Does the team have adequate and appropriate expertise and experience? If not, will gaps be addressed through training, recruitment or collaboration?
- ☐ What do you aim to influence or change through the project, and what mechanisms need to be in place to achieve this?
- ☐ Will online, offline or hybrid approaches be most appropriate for the communities you aim to engage?
- ☐ Will it be appropriate to use AI tools in the design or delivery of the project? If these are to be used, have all team members been briefed on responsible use of AI (particularly generative AI)?
- ☐ Is funding in place to cover activities relating to disseminating outputs and realising impact?
- ☐ Who will evaluate the project, and how?
- ☐ What would it mean for this project to be successful?

Relationship Building

Have you considered:

- ☐ To what extent does the project team contain a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds to reflect or understand the experiences and needs of the communities you aim to engage? (Positionality Reflection)
- ☐ How might approaches need to be adapted to reach underserved or marginalized groups?
- ☐ How can previously underrepresented groups be included in the design and evaluation of the project?
- ☐ In what ways will public participants, and their communities, benefit from this project, and how can these benefits be maximised?
- ☐ In what ways does AI already impact the communities you aim to engage, and how will these impacts be addressed in the engagement activities?

Methods and Delivery

Have you considered:

- ☐ What would be a comfortable and accessible venue for the groups you plan to engage?
- ☐ What accessibility needs do participants have (e.g. translator, sign language, step-free access, large print materials)?
- ☐ Are online, offline or hybrid approaches most appropriate for the communities you are engaging?
- ☐ How might approaches need to be adapted to reach underserved or marginalized groups?
- ☐ What opportunities are there for participants to provide feedback and suggest changes to the methods and approach?
- ☐ What levels of knowledge/interest do participants have about AI?
- ☐ What do participants need to know about AI in order to take part in the activities, and how can this information be most effectively communicated?
- ☐ What start and end times would be most convenient for participants?
- ☐ What dietary requirements do participants have?
- ☐ Housekeeping: have you informed participants where restrooms and/or prayer rooms are and is there signage?
- ☐ Is there a first aid kit on site?

Outcomes and Impact

Have you considered:

- ☐ What barriers or challenges might limit the impact of your project? How could these be addressed?
- ☐ Where existing relationships with key stakeholders are not established, which organisations or individuals might act as gatekeepers?
- ☐ What are current areas of policy interest that your outcomes might relate to?
- ☐ What are the priorities and interests of the stakeholders you aim to influence, and how do your outcomes relate to these?
- ☐ Is follow-on funding needed to support work aimed at maximising impact?
- ☐ Will you need additional resources to support communication activities (e.g. developing a website)?

Sustainability and Revisitation

Have you considered:

- ☐ What barriers might there be to sustainability of engagement? How can these be addressed?

- What are public participants' priorities for future engagement?
- What is needed to ensure sustainability and continuity of staff within the project team?
- How might evidence of impact from the activities support proposals for future work?
- What might be needed to support community members to run and sustain public voice activities themselves?

AI as the Subject Matter

Have you considered:

- What aspects of AI are most relevant for the focus of this public voice activity?
- What aspects or uses of AI will be most relevant for the communities you are engaging?
- What level(s) of exposure will participants have had to AI tools? Are there likely to be varied levels of familiarity/ experience within the group? How might this affect the engagement activities?
- Are participants likely to have experienced negative impacts of AI (e.g. racially minoritised groups)? How might this impact engagement processes? And, how can you ensure participants can safely discuss the impacts of AI without needing to disclose personal experiences?