



Small Business Friendly Projects

An initiative of the Small Business
Development Corporation

Supporting small business during works projects

Interactive tools for state government agencies



Small Business
Development Corporation

13 12 49
smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

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Introduction

Understanding how small businesses operate is not the core business of government departments tasked with building or maintaining major infrastructure. Similarly, government officers are not trained to engage with small businesses during the planning phase of major projects. In recognition of this, the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) has developed this best practice guidance for agencies whose work may impact upon small businesses.

The purpose of this document is to help agencies be ‘small business friendly’ when undertaking works projects. It sets out a list of things to consider and questions to ask small business stakeholders when planning major works, with the aim of reducing impacts on small businesses located in the construction zone.

The SBDC is a Western Australian Government agency that has been delivering relevant, practical support to small businesses since 1984. Its primary role is to offer free, confidential advice and guidance to small business owners. The agency also works with all levels of government to improve their interactions with the small business sector.

The Small Business Development Corporation would like to acknowledge Melbourne Water, for giving permission to adapt its checklists to use in this guide. Thanks also goes to the teams from Main Roads, METRONET and Water Corporation for their feedback on previous drafts of this document.

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Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 1.a

Assessment of overall area

Name of suburb(s):	
Streets impacted (include indirect):	
Does this project impact on traffic flow to the area?	
Does this project impact on parking?	
Does this project impact on pedestrian access to the area?	
Are there any home-based businesses in the area? As these may not be visible, check with the local government for a list of registered home businesses.	
Are there pre-existing traffic issues in the area?	
Does the project impact on public transport to the area?	
Are there any permanent changes to access as a result of the project? Including changed road access/layout?	
How will permanent access changes impact the business?	

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 1.b

Questions for the local government	
Name of local government:	
Contact details of the local government eg. the economic development officer, community and engagement officer, traffic manager, environmental officer	
Details of significant events occurring in the area during construction phase eg. night markets, street festivals, local government roadworks	
Does the local government offer any support to local businesses? eg. advisory services	
Is the local government willing to waive fees for affected businesses? eg. alfresco dining fees, rates	
Is the local government willing to relax parking laws? eg. increasing parking time limits, reducing parking fees	
Is the local government willing to relax signage laws? eg. allowing businesses to put out extra signs to redirect customers	
Is there any other works being carried out in the area such as utility infrastructure upgrades? If yes, find out the contact details of the appropriate person in that company.	
Is the local government willing to collaborate in regards to special events?	
Is the local government willing to contribute financially to the project's construction mitigation strategies?	
Can they provide advice about the businesses located in the works zone, such as assisting with initial communication? Who is a potential advocate and who could be an agitator?	

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 2

Overview of small businesses in the area

Project name:

Loss of amenity	Y/N	Construction impacts	Y/N	Logistics impacts	Y/N
Noise, dust, vibration		Construction longer than one month		Limiting trucks and freight movements through the area	
Significant intrusion eg. large trench along road		Disruption to services or scheduled utility maintenance		Problems with supplying inventory stock or loss of perishable stock that can no longer be sold?	
Heavy machinery onsite during the day		Any restriction to foot traffic		Any supply chain impacts to other businesses?	
Heavy machinery stored on site		Impacts on road network		Changes to taxi access through area and drop-off points	
Loss of parking		Road/lane closures		Changes to access for disability/aged transport providers	
Loss of access		Permit breaches eg. blocking fire exits or disabled access		Changes to public transport schedules or access to the area	
Loss of footpath/nature strip		Any other permit breaches?		Relocation of bus/train/taxi rank	
Visual noise eg. signage, site office, fenced off areas, large number of workers				Impacts on any small businesses that may not be located in the area but would be affected by changes to traffic flow?	

Notes:

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 3

Things to consider when developing your construction mitigation program (CMP)

Will the CMP be funded in the project budget?	
If it will be funded, at what level?	
If it's not funded, are there opportunities to undertake no cost strategies? eg. offering business advice from the SBDC, amending construction schedules to avoid peak times	
Will a CMP be a KPI in the head contract?	
How many businesses will be affected? This will determine the types of strategies the project can afford to implement	
Which businesses will be eligible for the CMP? eg. all small businesses (for profit) within a 2km radius of the construction zone	
How will the project team evaluate the success of each strategy?	
Which strategies will suit your project and the affected business?	
Will the local government collaborate in implementing and funding a CMP?	
Conduct research into similar projects using CMP	
Consider developing eligibility criteria around which businesses can access the CMP eg. within 2km of construction zone	

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 4

Strategy ideas to include in your construction mitigation program (CMP)			
Category: MONETARY			
Strategy	Pros and cons	Estimated cost	Agreed outcome
<p>Matched advertising Create an advertising fund that is used to promote the local area to potential customers and visitors. The project team could match the amount of money contributed by local businesses to the fund.</p>			
<p>Compensation for loss Government reimburses businesses for losses directly caused by construction. This could involve using an independent loss assessor and eligibility criteria.</p>			
<p>Loan programs Provide low interest loans to help with cash flow during construction.</p>			
<p>Grants For example, subsidising the discounts offered by businesses; providing grants for businesses to develop advertising or communication plans to increase foot traffic; grants for improvement to business premises.</p>			
<p>Waiving business fees For example, working with the local government to organise waiving alfresco dining fees during the construction period.</p>			

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 4

Strategy ideas to include in your CMP cont.

Category: AREA AND BUSINESS PROMOTION

Strategy	Pros and cons	Estimated cost	Agreed outcome
<p>Advertising Promoting the business through TV or radio advertising; posters on buses; developing strategies to engage with media; destination marketing; creating a dedicated website profiling businesses in the area; Facebook pages.</p>			
<p>Competitions for visitors To encourage people to visit the area and spend money, eg. entering visitors into a raffle, hiding an object in the area and awarding a prize to the person who finds it.</p>			
<p>Merchandise Create maps to show visitors how to access the area and the location of businesses; providing a coupon book promoting discounts for businesses in the area.</p>			
<p>Events Organise special events to attract people to the area, eg. walking tours of businesses for social media influencers to promote on their accounts, art installations, celebration parties, markets.</p>			

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 4

Strategy ideas to include in your CMP cont.

Category: IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE AREA AND BUSINESSES

Strategy	Pros and cons	Estimated cost	Agreed outcome
Signage Provide free 'open for business' and parking signs, signs pointing people to alternate routes to get to businesses.			
Parking Provide alternative parking, make parking free, minimise the effect on parking areas in the construction phase.			
Transport Provide free public transport to the area.			
Visual improvement Use temporary artwork to cover fences, include images of what the area will eventually look like, local artists making the area more attractive.			

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 4

Strategy ideas to include in your CMP cont.

Category: BUSINESS EDUCATION

Strategy	Pros and cons	Estimated cost	Agreed outcome
<p>Printed Create construction survival guides, information packages, toolkits for social media, communication strategies and advertising ideas for businesses to use. Use <i>A Guide to preparing for local disruption</i> (see tool 7) as a template.</p>			
<p>Advisory Offer seminars or advisory appointments on how to maximise business opportunities around major events to counter shifts in foot traffic and future proof the business, including low cost marketing strategies, how to keep customers coming, improving business efficiency and practices. The SBDC offers a free business advisory service. Visit smallbusiness.wa.gov.au</p>			

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 4

Strategy ideas to include in your CMP cont.

Category: OTHER

Strategy	Pros and cons	Estimated cost	Agreed outcome
<p>Free counselling and advice Offer free support by phone for businesses affected by construction work.</p>			
<p>Procurement Support businesses by buying from them during the project, eg. catering for staff events, displaying menus and promotional materials from local business in the break room of site workers.</p> <p>Prior to construction commencing, the project team could invite businesses to a forum and provide information on what kind of goods and services the project team will be purchasing throughout the project. Businesses can register their interest and if suitable, be invited to tender for those contracts.</p>			

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 5

Focus on individual small businesses

Note for project team:

- This checklist is to be completed during the site visit, in conjunction with the small business owner/representative.
- Hand out the *Guide to preparing for local disruption*. (You can also include tip sheets, mental health resources, template for tracking their profit etc. Contact the SBDC for more information.)
- The completed checklist is used to build an information profile on each individual small business.

Business name: _____

Type of business: _____

Main contact (specify – owner or manager): _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

Street address: _____

Postal address: _____

General

Opening hours:

Who is the best person to communicate with at the business? eg. manager/owner

Who owns the building?

Preferred method of communication for project updates

Main source of income eg. product sold, online sales, services provided

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 5

Focus on individual small businesses cont.

General

Discuss their relationship with the landlord

- Is it good? Would they be able to negotiate a rent reduction if business dropped off during the construction period?
- Would the landlord be open to discuss changing the lease agreement? eg. moving to an alternative use. Contact the SBDC's commercial tenancy team for free help with these issues. Visit smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

Operations

Number of staff employed:

Is it possible for the business to close down temporarily during construction or could staff take leave?
For example, does the construction coincide with a slow trade period or staff leave?

Any upcoming or special events happening?
eg. business promotion day

Customer demographic information:

Expected customer visits per day:

Delivery times:

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 5

Focus on individual small businesses cont.

Operations

Delivery types (wet, dry, perishables etc.):

Truck sizes:

Peak busy times

- during the day
- during the year

Low peak times of operation

- during the day
- during the year

Does the business use the area at the front of the shop? eg. for displays, alfresco dining

How much notice would be required to change staff rosters?

How much notice would be required to change trading hours?

How much notice would be required to change stock levels and pre-arranged deliveries?

Access

Any special access requirements:

Delivery access requirements:

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 5

Focus on individual small businesses cont.

Access

Customer parking:

Staff parking:

Business strategy

Current marketing/communication strategy (if any):

How do they currently engage with customers?

Have they considered diversifying their business, eg. home delivery, online sales, catering operations?

Would they like business advice? Refer them to the SBDC for any dispute related issues and free general business advice.

W: smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

T: 13 12 49

Other notable information:

Possible solutions for this business (from the approved project CMP)

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 6

Individual small business impact assessment report

Note for project team:

- The report is to be completed by the project team after they have completed the site visit to the small business.
- It should not be done in the presence of the business owner as it records the project team's assessment of the potential impacts on each business.

Business name: _____

Type of business: _____

Main contact (specify – owner or manager): _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

Street address: _____

Postal address: _____

Amenity and access

Any likely impact from
changed traffic conditions:

Any special access/parking
requirements:

Changes to taxi access:

Changes to disability
transport access:

Changes to public
transport:

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 6

Individual small business impact assessment report cont.

Amenity and access

Changes to foot or road access:

Will fencing/hoarding restrict access and line of sight to business?

Noise/dust/vibration:

Economic considerations

Loss of business trading expected:

Seasonal considerations required to mitigate impacts:

Logistical considerations

Restricted movements of trucks/ freight required by the business:

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 6

Individual small business impact assessment report cont.

Logistical considerations

Impact on perishable stock or deliveries (highly relevant in areas with market type businesses):

Any supply chain impacts:

Other

Special requirements eg. other business aspects impacted such as alfresco dining:

Other miscellaneous considerations?

Solutions from the CMP to be offered to business owner

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 7

A guide to preparing for local disruption

This guide is for small businesses likely to be affected by public works. The content was prepared by the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC). It's based on their 30 years of experience in supporting small businesses during all stages of start-up and development. You can personalise this template with your agency's own branding.

It is almost inevitable that, at some point, your business will be affected by public works. Digging up roads, traffic diversions, major construction projects, pipes and cabling are the sorts of activities that could affect you and your business, sometimes over a long period of time.

Despite the pain, public works are often ultimately a good thing for small business

Public works could increase the value of your business by improving the look and feel of the surrounding area, growing foot traffic or attracting new clients.

If a public works program is planned near your business, there are actions you can take to minimise the impact during the construction phase. Think about what you can plan now, so that your business will be ready to take advantage of the improvements this project may bring.

Get involved early

Typically, public works are planned several years in advance. Read any material the government department involved or your local council may send you and keep an eye on their website, so that you are aware of what is being proposed.

Get involved to make sure your concerns or suggestions are heard and considered – this is the best time to try to influence change.

Make contact with other affected business owners, local business associations or chambers of commerce, and your local council member to make sure that everyone is aware of the project and what it means for the area.

Attend any planning meetings to find out more detail and to voice your opinion

It can be useful to talk with businesses and chambers in other locations that have been affected by construction projects in the past and see what worked well during this time and what they'd have done differently.

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 7

A guide to preparing for local disruption cont.

Ideas for your local business community

Like every business owner, you want to keep your current customers and to continue attracting new ones. Your customers may need to be given some good reasons to keep returning to your area during the construction phase of a project. Research indicates that clients who move away from businesses as a result of surrounding construction projects will often permanently change their buying habits – but you can take positive steps to help keep your customers throughout the construction works.

If other businesses share your concerns or support your ideas, then you have more chance of being able to remind customers that you are still open for business.

Join forces with other local businesses to keep your customers coming.

Your local council or the government agency carrying out the works might have some funds available, but, if not, it's worth contributing to a shared fund to get a professional and co-ordinated marketing message together. You could:

- Agree on a shared tagline (eg. "Beach Street misses you – come back and visit us soon!").
- Place professionally printed signs in prominent areas around the site and in nearby locations. Check if you need local government approval to keep this signage to remain in place throughout the project. You may also find

that previous stringent restrictions have been relaxed during this period of disruption.

- Create images of the message produced that you can post online on websites and in social media.
- Plan a series of business-generating promotional events in your neighbourhood. Pool your ideas and resources to do something really special and creative – people love being the first to try something new (and can share their experience on social media).
- Be aware that affected business owners may operate in the business-to-business market, such as accountants, bookkeepers and wholesale suppliers, and have different needs.
- Create a private Facebook group to share information and construction updates with other local businesses. This is also a great way to share any successful tactics used to encourage customers.
- Look at options to get other community organisations involved, such as schools and sporting groups, to encourage local support for business.

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 7

A guide to preparing for local disruption cont.

How to handle the impact on your business

It is reasonable to expect that your revenue may drop during the construction phase of a major project near your premises. However, there are a number of practical steps you can take to reduce the impact of the works on your business.

You could reduce expenses

- Plan staff leave over the construction phase.
- Reduce hours for any casual staff.
- Contact your financial institution to see if debt and lines of credit can be restructured.
- Reduce your inventory.
- Change your business hours to work around the construction.

Explore ways to attract new customers

- Diversify your products or services.
- If customers are finding it hard to reach you, there might be ways to go to them. For example, providing home deliveries or promoting telephone/online business.

Find ways to keep your existing customers happy

- Share what's going to happen with your customers and keep talking to them – don't assume they know or have remembered what's planned.
- Don't complain to customers about the disruption—they might be supportive of the project and decide to take their business elsewhere. Customers might also be put off coming to the area if they are hearing only negative messages about construction restricting access, particularly if they are personally supportive of the work.
- Build a customer database, so you can keep them up to date about anything you are doing

differently during the construction (such as changing trading hours), and let them know about new initiatives.

- Consider ways you could reduce the construction noise or mess. For example, you could put felt under tables or install better seals around doors and windows to absorb sound and dirt.

Make it easy for people to find you

- If regular access is going to be difficult, plan a different path to your door.
- Consider changes to parking, public transport stops, as well as foot traffic and the likely impact.
- Contact your regular customers and suppliers, so everyone will know how to find you.
- Explore other locations for collection points or delivery services.
- Provide information on how to access your business across digital channels and through a script for staff.
- Discuss the construction schedule with the agency in charge of the works. For example, if your busiest time is from 7am to 8am, could the construction work start at 8.30am to avoid your peak trading time? Are there likely to be any disruptions to power and water supplies at key times?
- Find out whether the project will result in permanent changes to access to the area. If yes, consider whether you need to change your marketing materials (eg. directions to find your business)?

Tools for the project planning/pre-construction phase



TOOL 7

A guide to preparing for local disruption cont.

How to handle unexpected issues

When it comes to any major works project, expect the unexpected!

Weather conditions, equipment obstructing walkways and entrances, project delays and seasonal events can all cause problems for you and your business. If a particular issue arises, focus your energy on solving the problem and finding ways to avoid it in the future so that it won't have as much impact on your business.

If you haven't already been advised, get in touch with the government agency in charge of the project to ask for a single point of contact so you can get to know the team. While it may be a stressful time for you, remember that they are also there to do a job. The quicker they can complete the project, the sooner you'll be back to 'business as usual'.

Need more help?

If you need any help with planning for the disruption, during or after the project the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) has a team of advisers who are ready to help you. The services of this State Government agency are free, and they can provide support across a wide range of issues including:

- new ways to promote your business
- making operational changes
- financial management
- negotiations with landlords
- managing disputes

Help is available by phone, email or take advantage of their walk-in service open from 8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.

W: smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

E: info@smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

T: **13 12 49**

Visit: **Level 2, 140 William St, Perth (located just above Perth Underground train station)**

You can also find support and advice from thousands of other WA business owners by joining the SBDC's Facebook group, '**I'm a small business owner in Western Australia**'.



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