The Ministry of Engagement

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 03

Closing the loop when the answer is no

“Thanks for your feedback.” Can people see what you did with it?

Name one request the project has not adopted. Could the person who raised it explain why?

If they can’t, the loop is still open. A decision people disagree with can still be explained well. A decision nobody explains feels like it was never considered.

For the person who owns the decision

A clear reason protects the decision. It shows what was weighed, who decided and what still applies. A vague answer invites the same request again, often with less goodwill.

What a reasoned response gives people

Evidence that their input reached someone, an honest account of the trade-off and a clear picture of what can still change. “We have noted your concerns” gives them none of these.

Start with one decision

Workbook 01 promises to explain the outcome. Workbook 02 tests whether the answer is really fixed. This workbook helps when the answer is still no.

The request we did not adopt

Write what was asked, in the words people used, and who asked.

© 2026 The Ministry of Engagement Pty Ltd. All rights reserved.

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 03

A reason, not a polite rejection

Before you write anything, check which kind of answer you are about to give.

A polite rejection

Thanks people, restates the project's position and closes the conversation. It may be courteous, but it does not show that anything was considered.

A reasoned response

Shows what was heard, which options were looked at, who decided and why. It names the trade-off and what the project will still do about the concern behind the request.

A response still waiting on a decision

If the decision has not been made, say so. Explain who will decide, when and how people will hear. Do not present a pending answer as final.

What did we actually consider?

Options tested, evidence used, requirements that applied and who advised.

Who decided, and on what basis?

Name the role, the decision and the reasons in plain language.

If you can't fill in these two boxes, you are not ready to say no. Go back to the decision-owner first.

© 2026 The Ministry of Engagement Pty Ltd. All rights reserved.

The Ministry of Engagement

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 03

Write the response

Use five short parts. Keep each one specific enough that someone outside the project could check it.

What we heard

The request and the concern behind it. Include views that disagreed with the project.

What we considered

The options looked at, the evidence and any requirement that limited the choice.

What was decided

State the decision plainly, including anything that did change.

Why

The main reasons and the trade-off. Avoid “operational reasons” without saying what they are.

What happens next

What we will still do, who owns it, by when, and where people can raise a further concern.

Check the tone. A clear no with real reasons is more respectful than a warm message that avoids the answer.

© 2026 The Ministry of Engagement Pty Ltd. All rights reserved.

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 03

What a reasoned no looks like

Fictional example: the construction compound

The request

Residents ask for a construction compound to be moved away from the homes that back onto it. They are worried about early-morning activity, lighting and trucks queuing in the street.

What was considered

The team tests two alternative sites with the delivery manager. One floods and needs approvals that would delay the works. The other has no safe truck access without a longer road closure.

The decision

The project director keeps the compound where it is. The team moves the site office and lighting to the far side, sets a truck holding point away from homes and agrees a review after the first month.

The response

Residents receive a short note setting out what they asked, the sites tested, why they were not used, what has changed and when the review will happen. Some residents still disagree. Their concerns stay on the record and the review goes ahead.

The answer was still no. But people could see their request was tested, who decided and what the project would do about the concern behind it.

Our equivalent

What could we honestly change, even if the main request stays unadopted?

© 2026 The Ministry of Engagement Pty Ltd. All rights reserved.

The Ministry of Engagement

PRACTICAL WORKBOOK 03

Keep the loop honest

Closing the loop does not mean ending the conversation. Be clear about what stays open.

The concern behind the request

A request is often a solution to a problem. If you can’t adopt the solution, say what you will do about the problem.

What people can still influence

Name any remaining choice, such as timing, access arrangements or how the impact is monitored. If nothing is open, say so.

Where disagreement goes

Tell people how to raise a further concern and who will look at it. Record unresolved views rather than closing them off to tidy the record.

Our message

What did we hear, what did we decide and why, and what happens next?

Who is still waiting to hear what happened to what they told us?

Next: Workbook 04 · Understand the burden, not just the stakeholder list.

Use and adapt the working pages for your own projects. Share the original with attribution. No resale or rebranding.

This is a planning aid, not evidence of support, and it won’t do the thinking for you.

The Ministry of Engagement

Unofficially official guidance from the Ministry.

© 2026 The Ministry of Engagement Pty Ltd. All rights reserved.