Lessons Learnt on Establishing Communities and Engaging Participants in Air Quality Studies

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Problem and Opportunities

- Across the SPF projects we noticed many of those who had worked with communities had encountered similar challenges

- These had delayed the collection of the data and taken up time and resources to persevere and develop work-arounds

Through sharing experiences can we prevent future projects encountering the same problems?

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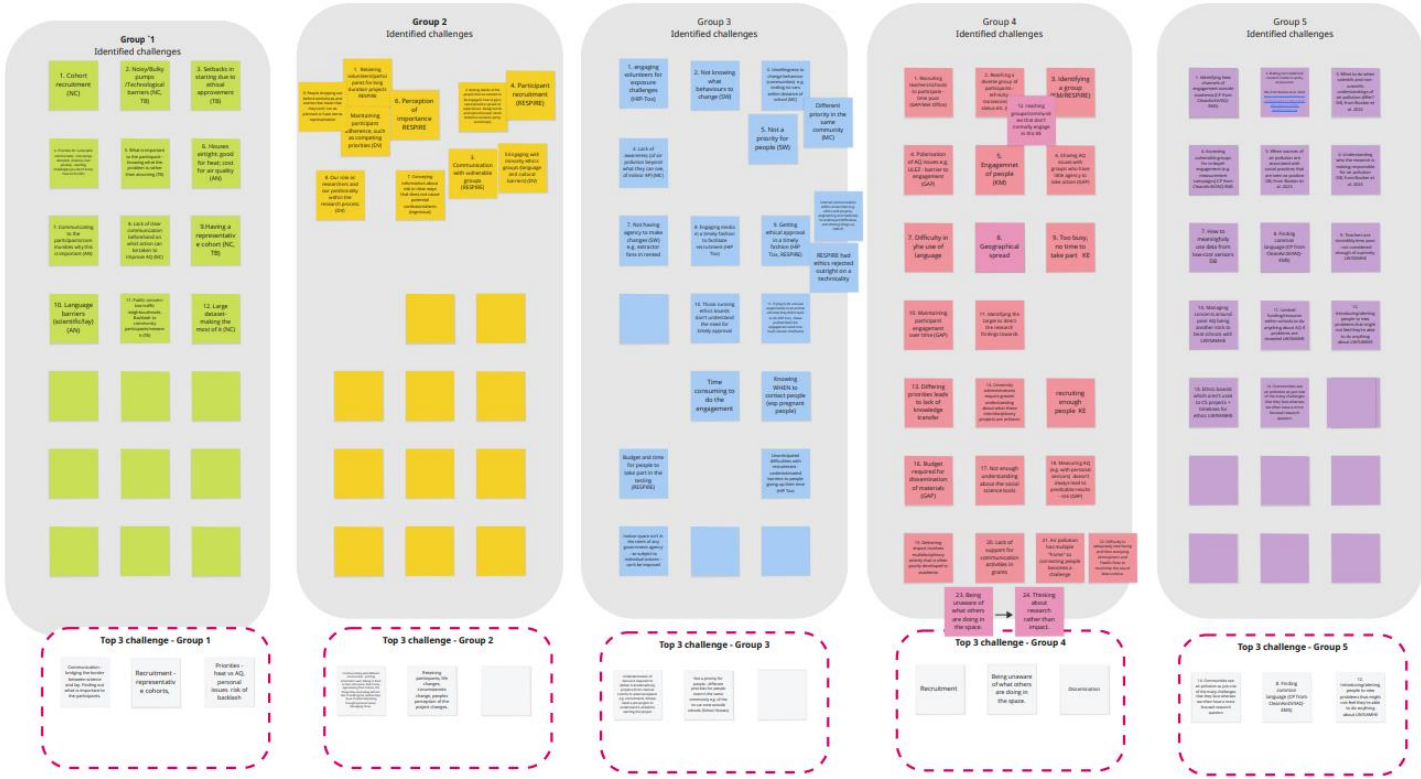
Collaborative Workshop

- 1.5 hour workshop held over Zoom with interactive Miro Board with 23 total participants
- Five groups with a facilitator - projects distributed across the groups
- Contributions from WellHome, RESPIRE, INGENIOUS, HIP-Tox, Clean Air4V and experiences from other projects



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Collaborative Workshop

"What challenges have you encountered?"

"For each challenge identified, what actions did you take or what actions could you take to overcome these?"

"What are your top tips and recommendations for engaging in community- and participatory- focussed research in Air Quality?"

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Grouping Challenges

Challenges could be separated into seven top-level groups

- Recruitment and Retention
- Communication
- Inability to Act
- Ethics
- Priorities
- Data
- Logistics

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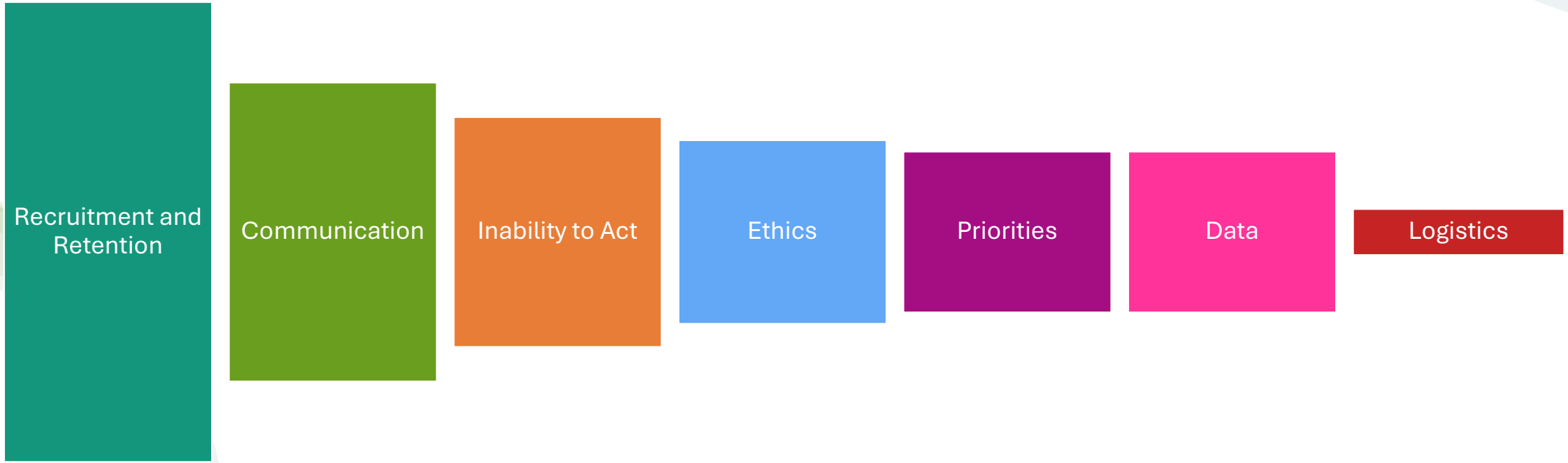
Scaled By Frequency of Challenges Raised

Grouping Challenges

Challenges could be separated into seven top-level groups



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Top two challenges of each theme

Most Incurred Challenges

Recruitment and Retention	Communication	Inability to Act	Ethics	Priorities	Data	Logistics
Having a Representative Cohort	Language Barriers (Scientific and Cultural)	Introducing Problems People Cannot Act On	Ethical Approval Delays Reducing Project Time	Competing Participant Priorities	Lack of Cohesion Between Studies	Sampling in People's Homes
Competing Time Constraints	Establishing How Best to Reach People	Not Knowing/ Unable to Make Changes	Not Inducing Anxieties/ Backlash	Different Priorities in the Same Community	How Best to Disseminate	Noisy/Bulky Apparatus

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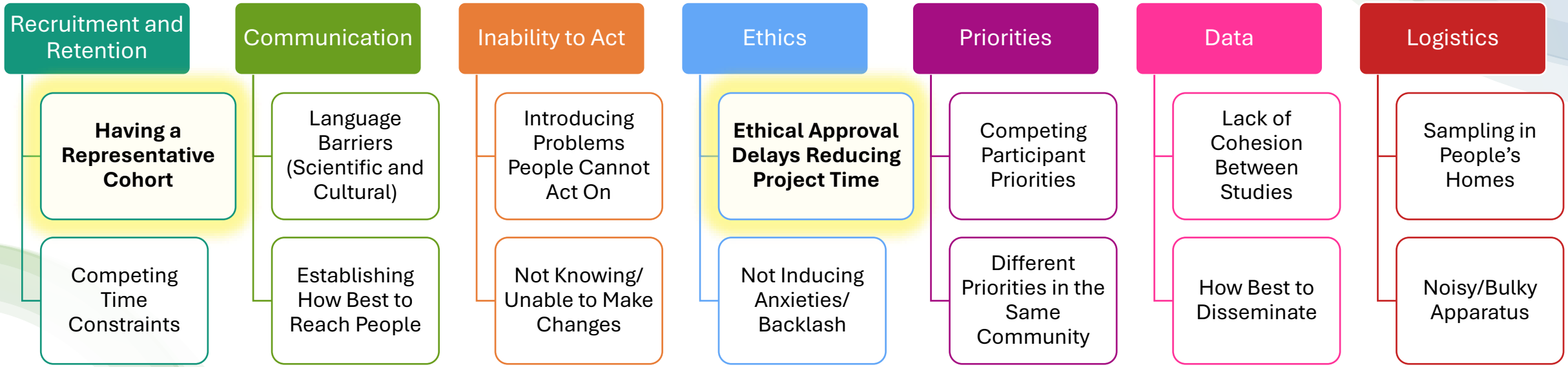
Top two challenges of each theme

Most Incurred Challenges



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Most cited recommendations

Communication	Involve communities in the design of studies at the start
	Allocate time and resources for engagement and involvement
	Focus groups/workshops to establish best communications method for your community
	Co-produce outputs with the community
	Establish/work with community champions to bridge the gap
Recruitment and Retention	Access existing cohorts or work with organisation who can link to potential participants
Inability to Act	Dynamic listening – what is preventing action? Be prepared to adapt
Overarching Recommendations	Strong evidence base and clear messaging on the importance of air quality
	Sharing experiences and best practice

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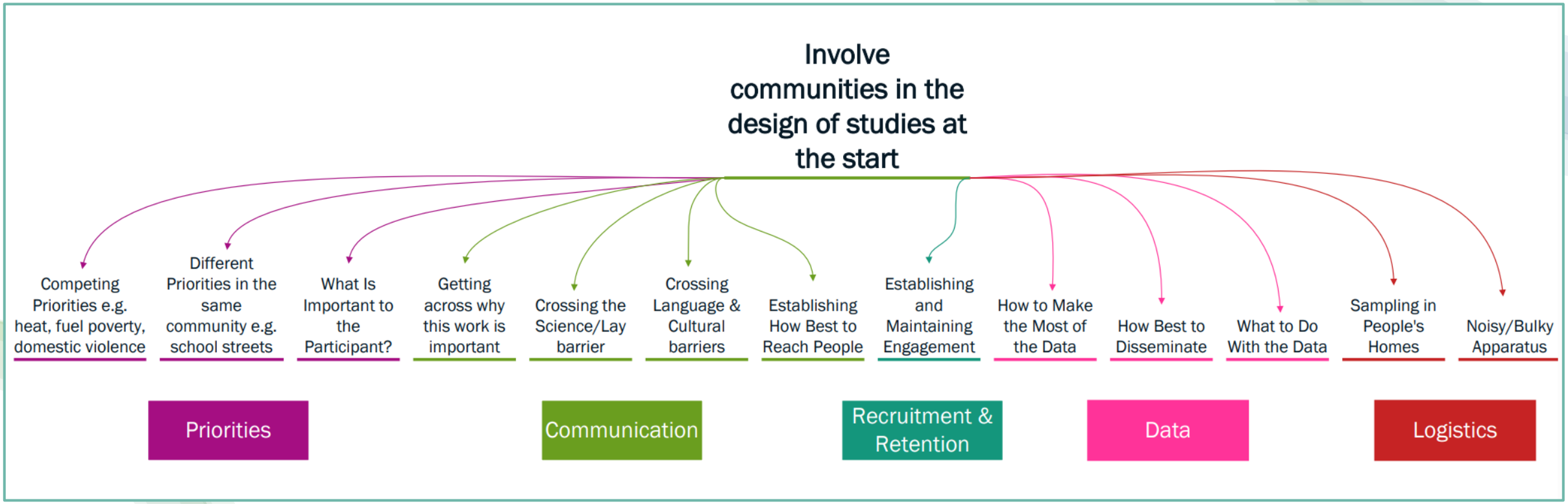
The Power of Communications



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Top Tips and Recommendations

1) Ethics and Recruitment Should Not Be Underestimated

2) Sharing What Worked AND What Did Not Work

3) Affected Communities Know Lots About the Issues That Affect Them

4) Harmonise Across Projects Early and Share Resources to Maximise Impact

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Summary

- Similar challenges were experienced across the Clean Air Programme projects
- Establishing Communities is resource intensive! Recruitment and Retention is a major challenge – where possible make use of existing cohorts
- Make sure the skills are present in the team – Include people experienced in communication, ethics and dissemination
- Co-Design of projects can help mitigate many challenges and increase the accessibility of outputs

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