The Community Trust Account

Community trust accumulates and depletes incrementally, based on whether participating produces visible outcomes. Every project is a transaction.

DEPOSITS +

Specific feedback communication
Participants know exactly what was heard and how it shaped the decision.

Honest constraints disclosed early
Transparent about what is and isn't open before engagement begins.

Input connected to outcomes
Participants can see where their contribution appears in the decision record.

Acknowledging what didn't change
Honest explanation of why input didn't alter certain outcomes.

Consistent follow-through
Closing the loop well, project after project, across departments.

WITHDRAWALS −

Superficial summary reports
Themes published without connecting input to specific decisions.

Loop closed after announcement
Community learns the outcome from media before they hear from you.

Consulting on pre-made decisions
Engaging on decisions effectively made before engagement ran.

No communication at all
The most common withdrawal. Participants never hear what happened.

Retrospective theatre
Community discovers the decision was made before engagement ran.

REBUILDING TRUST AFTER SUSTAINED WITHDRAWALS

Start small. A single project with genuinely open decision space and a well-delivered closed loop. Small proof points rebuild faster than large promises.

Name the problem explicitly. Acknowledge that feedback loops have not always been closed. Organisations that name the problem build credibility faster than those that quietly improve.

Use trusted intermediaries. Communities that have withdrawn from formal engagement often still trust local organisations and peer networks.

Communities that don't participate aren't disengaged. They're experienced.