Introduction to the Public Participation Toolkit

There is a great deal of public participation being implemented throughout the world today. Laws and regulations in many countries regularly require public meetings and comment on government actions. Some require even more extensive forms of public engagement and input. The United Nations and other international bodies have also reinforced the importance of public participation to good governance and civil society, and offer many guidelines, handbooks, and other materials to assist in these programs.

However, all of this activity does not automatically translate into good practice. Meaningful public participation requires much more than simply holding public meetings or hearings or collecting public comment.

In fact, conducting such events without a thorough grounding in the elements of meaningful public participation can often have a negative effect, resulting in decreased public trust and eroding relationships between and among stakeholders.

(For more information on the ethics, values, and principles of public participation, click here)

This toolkit provides a primer in public participation. It is designed with government agencies in mind, to help those who must manage processes where public input is important to decision-making. It is organized to provide you with a clear overview of important considerations in the design and implementation of a meaningful public participation program.

The toolkit is not intended to replace the important roles of training, experience, or expert assistance and will not turn a novice into an expert. It will help you identify some of the best practices in planning, skills, and behaviors that government agencies can use to design and implement meaningful public participation while incorporating fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or income.

It will also help you to recognize the difference between meaningful public participation and less valuable forms of public engagement. Most important, it will help you to select and design public participation programs to best meet the needs of your project and the publics you wish to engage.

The toolkit is organized to provide basic information and ideas as well as useful links to more content on the web. It follows a logical path to understand, plan, and implement a public participation program.

Toolkit sections include:

- Introduction to Public Participation

- Public Participation Situation Assessments
- Selecting the Right Level of Public Participation
- Public Participation Process Design
- Public Participation Tools
- Public Participation Foundational Skills, Knowledge, and Behaviors
- Public Participation Resources

Introduction to Public Participation

[VIDEO: A short video presenting an introduction to public participation will be streamed here.]

What is public participation?

Public participation can be any process that directly engages the public in decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making that decision.

Public participation is a process, not a single event. It consists of a series of activities and actions by a sponsor agency over the full lifespan of a project to both inform the public and obtain input from them. Public participation affords stakeholders (those that have an interest or stake in an issue, such as individuals, interest groups, communities) the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Agencies should not be concerned that seeking public input means having to do “what the public wants.” Generally speaking, there is no single public. Rather, the public consists of a range of stakeholders holding an array of views and concerns on an issue. When conducting meaningful public participation, an agency will gather input from a wide spectrum of stakeholder interests, resulting in a wide range of views and concerns and giving fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and decisions made through the public participation process. The job of the sponsor agency then is to balance among these views and concerns and reflect back the decisions so that the public understands how its diverse concerns were considered Not all public participation is the same. Conducting meaningful public participation involves seeking public input at the specific points in the decision process and on the specific issues where such input has a real potential to help shape the decision or action. It is rarely appropriate or useful to simply ask the public “what do you want.” Such broad questions will only raise expectations and likely direct input to areas where no influence is actually possible. Sometimes the opportunity for influence is quite small, while at other times the public can have a great deal of influence. The amount of this potential influence is the main consideration in designing a successful public participation program.

The section of this toolkit titled Selecting the Right Level of Public Participation discusses the different forms that public participation might take depending on the potential for public influence on a decision. These forms include:

- informing the public by providing information to help them understand the issues, options, and solutions
- consulting with the public to obtain their feedback on alternatives or decisions
- involving the public to ensure their concerns are considered throughout the decision process, particularly in the development of decision criteria and options
- collaborating with the public to develop decision criteria and alternatives and identify the preferred solution

- empowering the public by placing final decision-making authority in their hands.

Depending of the form of participation sought, public participation makes use of a variety of tools and techniques to inform the public, generate public input, and, in some cases, build consensus and reach agreement.

What are the benefits of public participation?

Public participation is not simply a nice or necessary thing to do; it actually results in better outcomes and better governance. When done in a meaningful way, public participation will result in two significant benefits:

1. Sponsor agencies will make better and more easily implementable decisions that reflect public interests and values and are better understood by the public
2. Communities develop long-term capacity to solve and manage challenging social issues, often overcoming longstanding differences and misunderstandings.

How does public participation result in better decisions?

Public participation contributes to better decisions because decision-makers have more complete information – in the form of additional facts, values, and perspectives obtained through public input – to bring to bear on the decision process. As a result, they can incorporate the best information and expertise of all stakeholders. Decisions are more implementable and sustainable because the decision considers the needs and interests of all stakeholders and vulnerable populations, and stakeholders better understand and are more invested in the outcomes. As a result, decisions that are informed by public participation processes are seen as more legitimate and are less subject to challenge. Decision-makers who fully understand stakeholder interests also become better communicators, able to explain decisions and decision rationale in terms stakeholders understand and in ways that relate to stakeholders' values and concerns.

How does public participation develop community capacity?

Another major result of sustained stakeholder participation in decisions and their implementation is the development of capacity for managing difficult social problems. This capacity includes improved relationships between decision-makers and the public, and among different stakeholders themselves. Also, when done well, public participation helps to teach stakeholders meaningful and collaborative ways to approach each other, manage difficult decisions, and resolve disputes. Stakeholders learn to appreciate each others' positions by first learning about each others' values and interests.

Once stakeholders are invited into the decision process, it becomes more difficult for them to merely stand to the side and say "no." As participants in good decision-making processes, all stakeholders must understand all sides of an issue, weigh the pros and cons, and make more thoughtful decisions. Stakeholders and communities do not generally achieve this on their own. Sponsoring agencies must recognize their responsibility to help communities build their capacity for collaborative problem solving. This community model facilitates collaboration to address environmental and/or public health issues in distressed communities.

Highlight: Think About Community Capacity Building as Part of Public Participation

Effective public participation depends in part on a sponsor agency's willingness and ability to involve the public in the decision process. While it is critical that sponsor agencies develop the skills to think through, plan for, and implement a public participation process, it is no less important that the public develop the capacity to participate effectively in decision processes. A well-designed and sincere participation process will not fulfill its potential if the public lacks the necessary participation skills. Hence, it is important for government agencies to build the public's participation capacity.

Building participation capacity can be achieved in several ways:

- Modeling the behaviors that you want to see exhibited throughout the process
- Developing and sharing with the public guidance documents that promote the values of public participation and delineate best practices
- Providing training to community leaders and stakeholder representatives in foundational public participation and communication skills Giving special consideration and attention to vulnerable populations and marginalized communities.
- Identifying facilitative leaders within sponsor agencies to mentor community groups/leaders by partnering with them during the planning and implementation of public participation processes. Inviting the public to participate in planning the process can create a sense of ownership among the public
- Hiring professional third-party facilitators to provide instruction at the project outset to sponsor agency staff and external stakeholders on participatory behaviors and techniques
- Where appropriate, using deliberative forums that encourage more active forms of participation instead of selecting forums that are viewed by sponsor agencies as being more "safe" because they control participation
- Providing technical assistance to the public or community groups to help them understand technical information relevant to the decision.

These strategies can help build the public's capacity for participation. Ongoing interest in public participation, however, will depend on the extent to which public participation processes result in the opportunity for meaningful public input and influence on projects, and the degree to which sponsoring agencies are accountable to these results.

What are the necessary conditions for successful public participation?

Successful public participation requires the following conditions:

- **Clear purpose and goals** – a well-defined purpose for the public's role in the project that is real, practical, and shared among stakeholders. Sponsoring agencies must determine the appropriate level or degree of public participation for the decision at hand and set the public's expectations accordingly. No one benefits when agencies promise more in the way of public participation than they are willing to commit to and deliver. In fact, making promises that cannot be kept will undermine public confidence in the public participation process

- **Clear structure and process** – well-defined rules about how public participation will be conducted and how the decision will be made
- **Actual opportunity for influence** – the real opportunity for public input to be considered in making the decision
- **Commitment to the process** – managers and staff alike must be committed to the full range of activities required to make public participation work and be willing to obtain and consider public input in making the decision

Inclusive and effective representation – reaching out to representatives of the full range of relevant stakeholder interests regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or income

Highlight: Making Promises

At the core of every public participation process is a promise to the public. This promise represents what the public can expect from the sponsoring agency with regard to access to and potential influence on the decision. The promise also defines the level of information and communication that can be expected. Sponsoring agencies that make clear, explicit promises will set clear expectations with their stakeholders and will be held appropriately accountable. Without clear promises, the pubic will interpret a wide range of expectations, most of which are not intended and cannot be met. When making promises, it is important to follow through and consider these three factors:

1. **Promise** only what you believe you can deliver
2. **Deliver** what you have promised
3. **Demonstrate** what you deliver by communicating effectively.

What are some additional considerations for successful public participation?

In order to establish and maintain effective public participation, sponsoring agencies and decision makers should give careful consideration to how they are supporting the process. Some important elements to successful public participation can include the following:

- **Sufficient resources to conduct the process** – provide the funding and staff to support all aspects of the process, including a situation assessment, outreach activities, and obtaining and incorporating public input, including vulnerable populations
- **Participative capacity among staff and participants** – conduct training in communication, outreach, and collaborative problem solving skills
- **A climate of integrity** – trust and credibility of government are essential for public participation. Public participation will not flourish where government agencies or decision makers are corrupt or disingenuous about considering public input
- **A belief in the value of public input –** the knowledge that public input will result in better decision-making and that public participation results in better governance
- **Capacity to engage** - ensuring that agencies know how to design and implement public participation processes, and that agencies and the public alike have the knowledge and communication skills to participate effectively in the process

- **Complete transparency** – the timely sharing of easily understandable and accessible information to educate the public about the issues and options.

Highlight: The Importance of Transparency
Transparency represents the willingness of agencies to fully share the information, criteria, and deliberations of decision-making with the public. Without transparency, public input will not be based on the same considerations that decision-makers are actually using to make decisions. As a result, the public is unlikely to understand why decisions are made or how those decisions will impact them. Much public outrage is a result of not being provided complete and timely information, or being excluded from the process.

Although the conditions and responsibilities for public participation are significant, you should not feel daunted. Rather, public participation should be viewed as an opportunity to make a powerful decision – one that resolves issues to the broadest possible satisfaction and benefit of interested parties. When done well, the time and effort invested in public participation pay dividends by resulting in a more broadly acceptable, implementable, and sustainable decision.

Public Participation Situation Assessments

What is a Situation Assessment?

A situation assessment is conducted for the purpose of understanding the needs and conditions of your project and stakeholder community in order to design an effective public participation process. It consists of gathering information to determine the public participation program and techniques that are feasible and most appropriate for the circumstances. At the conclusion of a situation assessment, you should have enough information to determine the level of public participation for your project or decision and to design the public participation process.

Situation assessments can range from limited and informal to intensive and time-consuming. Typically, more formal situation assessments result in more detailed recommendations for the public participation process.

Highlight: Who are Stakeholders and what does it mean to be inclusive?

Quite simply, a stakeholder is any person or group who has or perceives they have a stake in the outcome of a decision or project. Thus, stakeholder as a generic term literally can mean anybody. In practical terms, stakeholders represent the range of interests and voices engaged in any given project, and this includes the agencies, media, and other formal groups. On the public side, stakeholders can be classified in two major groups: organized and grass roots.

- Organized stakeholders generally have formed an organization with some level of staffing (paid or volunteer) and resources. Organized stakeholders generally have a higher capacity for tracking and engaging in a project than grass roots stakeholders. Organized stakeholders are generally well aware of projects and can be aggressive in seeking access and influence.
- Grass roots stakeholders generally have limited if any resources or time to engage in a project. They often are not even aware of the project or their need to engage until the project is quite advanced. In order for grass roots stakeholders to engage in a project, sponsoring agencies often have to be highly proactive in reaching out to and engaging them, often dedicating more time and resources to assure their inclusion. This is an important part of a transparent and robust public participation plan.

To have inclusive public participation, both organized and grass roots stakeholders need to be engaged in the project. It is important to identify and seek out the full range of interests and perspectives that are potentially affected by a project and ensure that their voices are heard.

Outcomes from a Situation Assessment

Regardless of the level of formality and rigor of the effort, all situation assessments should result in the following key findings:

- the key stakeholder voices that must be engaged for a credible process
- the main stakeholder concerns, issues, and interests

- the specific opportunities where public input can help to shape the decision
- any issues or constraints that may affect public participation.

Why do a Situation Assessment?

The main purpose of a situation assessment is to identify the conditions necessary for a successful public participation process so that the sponsor agency and stakeholders are engaged in a common purpose.

The information obtained through a situation assessment will help you to design a public participation process that responds to the needs and interests of both the decision makers and external stakeholders. It will contribute to a process that is based on a shared understanding of the decision to be made, the issues to be addressed, and the role of the public in the decision process.

Specifically, a situation assessment should:

- clarify the problem or opportunity to be addressed and the decision to be made
- define the sponsor agency's approach to public participation
- identify stakeholders and their concerns, including marginalized communities
- reveal information gaps or misunderstandings early enough so they can be addressed
- identify potential constraints on the public participation process
- surface issues that will need to be considered in the decision process

How do you conduct a Situation Assessment?

A situation assessment consists of two phases:

- **Phase 1: the internal assessment**, the purpose of which is to clarify the problem or opportunity, the decision to be made, available resources and commitment for public participation, and the sponsor agency's expectations about the appropriate level of public participation
- **Phase 2: the external assessment**, the purpose of which is to identify the full range of external stakeholders that should be engaged and to learn from the public to understand how stakeholders perceive the situation and decision to be made.

The first phase of the situation informs the second, and both phases involve directly reaching out to both internal and external stakeholders.

The results of the phase 1 internal assessment will be to:

- identify who (i.e., which group and/or individuals) has final decision authority
- understand how the agency defines the problem or decision to be made
- identify any constraints on the decision (such as regulations and timing)

- obtain a preliminary list of stakeholders who are likely to participate in the decision and the issues associated with the decision
- identify available resources and capacity to conduct public participation
- identify the level of public participation the agency is expecting

After completing the first phase, the phase 2 external assessment will include interviews with a broad range of stakeholders to achieve the following:

- inform them of the nature and extent of the decisions to be made
- assess their current understandings of the situation
- assess their interest in participating in the decision process
- identify additional interested and important stakeholders

Situation assessments will begin by engaging with the known universe of stakeholders – these are people or organizations that were identified by the sponsor agency and/or those that have a history of involvement in the issue under discussion. The vast majority of stakeholders who will get involved in your project are already involved in their community. Start with these people and think broadly about who else might be interested in or affected by your project. Interviewing known stakeholders will also help you identify other stakeholders by asking who else you should interview. At some point in your search you will be given fewer and fewer new names, which is a good indicator that you have identified most of the important stakeholders.

When conducting stakeholder interviews, ask the following types of questions:

- How do you view the current situation?
  - What issues are involved in the decision?
  - How important are these issues to you?
  - What are your main interests in this project or decision?
  - What information and sources of information are available to you now?
  - What other information would be helpful?

- Who's affected?
  - Who else should I be speaking to?
  - Whose support is crucial to implementing the decision?
  - Who has the ability to block implementation of the decision?
  - What are the important relationships among stakeholders in this community?

- How would you like to be involved?
  - What role would you like to play or do you feel the community would like to play in decision making?
  - What are the best forums for your involvement?
  - How would you like to receive information and what are the sources of information that you use and trust?

- What's next?
  - What types of things could be done to help make this a meaningful process for your community?
  - This is what you can expect from us next.

What should you do with the results of the situation assessment?

The situation assessment results should provide you with enough information to determine the appropriate level of public participation and recommend a design or plan for a public participation process. The public participation process recommendation would include what issues should be addressed, which stakeholders should be included, the potential areas for public input and influence, the types of information and input activities that are likely to be effective, and what schedule to follow. The steps involved in public participation process design are discussed in detail in Public Participation Process Planning.

It should also give you a feel for how well the agency's and stakeholders' understanding of the decision and public participation expectations align and whether they need to be reconciled or otherwise managed. If the agency and public have very different understandings of the problem or issues to be addressed through the decision, then it is unlikely that the process will produce a sustainable decision. It is difficult to agree on a decision or solution when parties do not agree on the problem. More work may be required to frame the problem in a mutually acceptable way and/or align public participation expectations.

(For more additional information on conducting an internal situation assessment, click here)

(For more additional information on conducting an external situation assessment, click here)

Selecting the Right Level of Public Participation

VIDEO: A short video presenting the Spectrum will be streamed here.

Not all public participation is the same; there are numerous levels at which you might wish to engage with the public based on the project, the stakeholders, and the decisions to be made. To identify the appropriate level of public participation for your project, you must first answer the following question:

> How much potential influence on the decision or action are you willing to provide to the public?

The answer to this question is critical to the design and ultimate success of your public participation program. It is not uncommon for agencies to promise the public far more potential influence than is actually likely or possible. In general, this is not done purposely, but rather due to a lack of understanding or careful consideration of the role of the public at the conception of the project.

However, the risks of not clarifying the public's role are significant. If stakeholders perceive they will or believe they should have significant input to and influence on a decision but in the end do not, they will be dissatisfied with the outcome of the process, regardless of how much public participation activity may have occurred.

It is important to recognize that the number of activities, expense, and time devoted to public participation do not mean the same thing as the potential for actual public influence on the decision. In public participation, a great deal of time, effort, and resources can easily be expended on the wrong pursuits, in turn leading to negative results. This is particularly true when you follow a prescribed set of activities in a law or regulation without first establishing a clear role for the public.

Fortunately, a number of simple tools exist to assist in the selection of the appropriate level of public participation, one of which is described here.

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) designed its Public Participation Spectrum to assist agencies in establishing and communicating clear expectations regarding the intent of public participation projects.

The Spectrum is organized around the principle that the level of public participation is directly tied to the level of potential public influence on the decision or action being considered. This potential influence can vary anywhere from none at all to total. The spectrum is designed to understand the key levels that should be considered within these extremes for designing a public participation program.

It is important to recognize that we are only talking about *potential* influence. In few cases can you promise the exact nature of the public's ultimate influence. This is generally not apparent until the end of a well-implemented program, when full consideration is given to the input received.

You can, however, conduct thoughtful planning to fully understand the dynamics of the project, the desired and likely nature of public input, and the opportunities to address public concerns, desires, and interests.

Five levels of public participation are described on the Spectrum ranging from no influence (Inform) to total influence (Empower). Under each level, three items are described that help to explain the level of participation more fully.

1. ***The Public Participation Goal***. The goal of the public participation project describes the agency's intent with regard to engaging the public in the project and is used to make sure that common internal expectations (those of the sponsor agency) are established and maintained. The goal statements on the spectrum are intended to provide generic guidance and are not expected to be used exactly as written. As you approach each new project, you should give careful thought to identifying the specific goals that apply to your conditions, opportunities, constraints, and stakeholders.
2. ***The Promise to the Public***. Every public participation program results in a promise to the public regarding the level of their potential influence on the outcome of the project and what they can expect from the sponsor agency. The spectrum is designed to remind agencies that they need to make this promise clear and explicit so as to create common expectations among all stakeholders. As with the goal statements, the promises on the spectrum are intended to provide generic guidance and are not expected to be used exactly as written. You should always give careful thought to creating promise statements that fit the conditions, circumstances, and stakeholders for that project.
3. ***Example Techniques***. In each column, a few public participation techniques or tools are identified to suggest the types of activities that might be used at different levels of public participation. As the level of public participation increases, you will seek to engage the public more often and with more intensity. However, it is important to understand that these are just examples and most techniques can be designed to be used at any level of the spectrum.

What are the Different Levels of Public Participation?

The two ends of the spectrum relate to the extreme levels of potential public influence, from no opportunity to influence (the inform level) to total influence over the outcome (the empower level). These two levels of public participation work to frame the spectrum, but are not actually where most meaningful public participation occurs. At the inform level, since there is no real opportunity for public influence, we do not conduct public participation; however, it is there to remind us that sometimes we can do no more than provide good information to the public. At the far right-hand side of the spectrum, empower represents a level of influence that we rarely provide to the public. Most agencies are not legally able to hand over their decision authority and to do this effectively would require a very rigorous program of public information and capacity building. Thus, it is in the middle three levels where most public participation occurs: consult, involve, and collaborate.

INFORM

The **Inform** level of public participation does not actually provide the opportunity for public participation at all, but rather provides the public with the information they need to understand the agency decision-making process. This level is on the spectrum to remind agencies that sometimes there is no opportunity for the public to influence decision-making and simply informing them is the appropriate activity. When you conduct the "inform" level of public participation, it is important to recognize that you are not trying to persuade or manipulate the public in any way. As such, the inform level is not the same as a public relations campaign. Rather, the inform level of public participation requires the agency to serve as an honest broker of information, giving the public what they need to fully understand the project and decision and to reach their own conclusions as to the appropriateness and adequacy of the decision.

- Both the public participation **goal** and **promise** at the inform level is to keep the public informed.

CONSULT

The ***Consult*** level of public participation is the basic minimum opportunity for public input to a decision. Consult simply means to ask. There is no invitation to sit down together and work on things in any cooperative way. The agency merely asks the public for their opinions and considers the input it receives as it makes the decision. At consult, agencies generally ask for input at set points in the process and do not provide an ongoing opportunity for input.

- The public participation **goal** at the consult level is to obtain and consider public input.
- The **promise** at the consult level is to consider the public input received and to provide feedback as to how that input influenced the decision.

INVOLVE

The ***Involve*** level of public participation is more than a consultation. To involve means to include. At the involve level, the public is invited into the process, usually from the beginning, and is provided multiple if not ongoing opportunities for input as decision-making progresses. However, the agency is still the decision-maker and there is no expectation of building consensus or providing the public with any sort of high-level influence over the decision.

- The public participation **goal** at the involve level is to work directly with the public and consider their input throughout the decision-making process.

- The **promise** at the involve level is that the public will have access to the decision process and decision makers and will be provided the opportunity to give input throughout the process and receive direct feedback on how their input helped to influence the decision.

COLLABORATE

The ***Collaborate*** level of public participation includes all the elements of involve. To collaborate means to work together. At the collaborate level, the public is directly engaged in decision-making. Collaborate often includes the explicit attempt to find consensus solutions. However, as at involve, the agency is still the ultimate decision-maker. The degree to which consensus will be sought and how much decision authority the agency is willing to share must be made explicit. In the end, the agency will take all of the input received and make the decision. Conducting a collaboration level program is time-consuming and resource intensive and should not be entered into lightly. If stakeholders do reach consensus and this is not given serious consideration by the sponsoring agency, it can have serious negative consequences on the project and on future relationships with stakeholders.

- The public participation **goal** at the collaborate level is to design a process that allows for effective partnering with the public on all aspects of the decision.
- The **promise** at the collaborate level is that the public will be engaged in all key activities and decisions, and their input will be incorporated to the maximum extent possible. Consensus is not always sought at the collaborate level; the degree to which consensus will be sought should be an explicit part of the promise.

EMPOWER

At the **Empower** level, agencies provide the public with the opportunity to make decisions for themselves. The most common activities at this level are public voting or ballots, but there are other techniques available as well. Government agencies rarely conduct public participation at the empower level. In general, agencies are not permitted to delegate their decision authority to the public, and creating a fair, legitimate, and inclusive process for empowerment beyond basic voting is complex and challenging. Basic voting by itself often fails to create the level of public knowledge and broad range of public input that is needed for meaningful public participation.

- The public participation **goal** at the empower level is to create a program that allows the public to make an informed decision.
- The **promise** at the empower level is that the agency will implement what the public decides.

Your public participation program may include multiple levels of public participation, both at different stages of the process and because different stakeholders will choose to engage at different levels.

The level of public participation that you select for your project or decision is the most intensive, or highest, level of public participation that you will perform on the project. However, you will also be conducting public participation at all of the levels of the spectrum beneath that highest level. This is because stakeholders will choose the level of public participation at which they want to participate and not all stakeholders will want to engage at the highest level of public participation that is available.

Lower levels, particularly inform and consult can accommodate many stakeholders. Higher levels of participation require more effort on the part of both agencies and stakeholders and therefore generally attract fewer stakeholders. Sometimes, stakeholders may want to participate, but may not be aware of the opportunity. This is often seen in communities with vulnerable or marginalized populations. It is the agency's job to seek and reach out to all parts of the community. The highest level of collaboration, for example, involves consensus-seeking and is often limited to a representative group of stakeholders involved in long-term processes, such as long-term advisory boards. When creating an advisory board, it is important to ensure that representatives from all stakeholders are included to assure there is no social exclusion from the decision-making process. At the same time, many additional stakeholders may be engaged in the project at the involve level, attending public workshops and events, or at the consult level providing input through letters or the internet. Still more stakeholders may choose to engage at the inform level, tracking the project but offering no direct input. Thus a single project can be operating at four different levels of public participation. Designing a public participation program must therefore be done with this in mind.

(For resources on other public participation frameworks, click here)

Public Participation Process Planning

VIDEO: A short video presenting the steps of public participation planning will be streamed here.

The success of a public participation program is largely determined by how thoroughly and thoughtfully it is planned. Successful meetings and events are determined by the degree to which an agency effectively commits to and prepares for the entire process, especially creating and providing the information needed by stakeholders and building effective relationships with key stakeholders.

Highlight: The Importance of Relationships
You cannot effectively participate with people you do not know. Formal public hearings where agency staff never actually meet or interact with the public often fail because there are simply no relationships upon which to base communication. Relationships define the ability to fully understand one another and give proper consideration to one another's needs, issues, and concerns. In designing a public participation program, you need to pay a great deal of attention to creating the opportunities to get to know key stakeholders and create the kinds of dialogue spaces necessary to build trust and understanding.

There are five key steps in the planning process, each of which is discussed below:

1. Organize for Participation
2. Identify and Get to Know Your Stakeholders
3. Pick an Appropriate Level of Public Participation
4. Integrate Public Participation in the Decision Process
5. Match Public Participation Tools to Objectives Throughout the Process

Step 1. Organize for Participation

Ensure that public input is possible
The first step in planning for public participation is to ensure that you are seeking to obtain and use public input and not merely seeking public buy-in to an already determined outcome.

If there is little or no room for public influence over the decision, then public participation is not a reasonable option for your project. Instead, you should consider a public information or public relations project appropriate to your needs, timing, and circumstances.

Ensure that the sponsor organization is committed and able to involve the public
Once it is determined that real public participation is your intent, it is important to engage all levels of the sponsor organization, especially the decision-makers, to

understand their willingness to engage the public in the decision or action, and what the organization is seeking to gain from public participation. Factors to consider include:

- Are decision-makers open to and committed to considering public input in the decision process?
- Are there constraints around the decision that limit the ability to engage the public?
- What will a "successful" decision look like?
- Are there conflicting or competing priorities or goals within the sponsor organization?
- Are there unspoken interests or hidden agendas?
- Will the sponsor agency commit the necessary resources? Can the required staff commit the necessary time?
- Is there internal public participation capability? If not, can it be developed with additional training? Is the sponsor willing to contract for the expertise needed?
- To what extent will the decision-maker and key project personnel commit to public participation? What needs to be done to affirm and strengthen this commitment?

Identify where public input is desired and possible

It is not always possible for the public to be involved in all major decisions, or in all aspects of any given decision or action. It is essential for an agency to clarify for itself the specific issues and questions where public input is desired and where the public can have influence. Any constraints to public input need to be identified. The more clearly you articulate the areas for input, the more meaningful the ultimate input will be.

Assess and assemble needed skills

A wide variety of skills and experience are required to plan and implement meaningful public participation. Paramount among these are:

> **Communication**. The ability to identify and to portray the information that the public requires in order to participate meaningfully. The ability to listen for and understand the public's interests and concerns.
>
> **Facilitation**. The ability to recognize the importance, role and appropriate use of a facilitative presence and apply it effectively in facilitating both the overall process and specific events.
>
> **Conflict Management**. The ability to recognize the role of conflict in reaching a final solution and to work through and manage conflict situations.

Identify and commit needed resources

Identify the individuals, resources, organizations, and contractors that you will need to conduct the various facets of public participation and meet your promise to the public. Identify any training and development that is necessary for the team to succeed. Get these in place early so that all team members can plan together and begin developing needed stakeholder relationships.

Step 2. Identify and Get to Know Your Stakeholders

Identify the range of stakeholder perspectives that should be involved in your project

It is important to conduct a situation assessment to understand who might be impacted, who should be involved, and what concerns they bring to the process. It is essential that you identify all of the viewpoints and interests that must be heard to create a fully participatory process.

You should consider a broad range of interests that may be important to the community such as:

- Health
- Safety
- Pollution
- Property values
- Jobs
- Congestion
- Crime
- Local economy.

Identify specific stakeholders

By matching specific groups and individuals to the identified interests, you will ensure that your process will engage the full range of perspectives needed to conduct meaningful public participation. Careful consideration should be given to stakeholders that have a disproportionate burden regarding the decision you are making to assure they are aware of the project and how it they can provide input (if applicable).

You can identify additional information about the range of interests to be engaged by asking specific questions about your stakeholder community, such as:

- Who will be directly affected by the decision? Are there parts of the community that might be disproportionally burdened by the project?
- Who will be indirectly affected by the decision?
- Who wants to be involved?
- Who is already engaged or has contacted us in this issue?
- Who will be upset if they have no input to this decision?
- Who can affect the decision?
- Who can claim a legal standing (legal rights to...) that would be affected by the decision?
- Who has real or perceived moral claims that could affect the decision process or outcome?
- Who has the political clout to draw elected and appointed officials into the dispute?
- Who is committed to the various interest groups, such as community groups or business groups, and will be responsible for acting as liaison and leader?

- Who will be responsible for implementing the decision?
- Whose support is needed to implement and enforce the decision?
- Who could take legal action to block implementation of the decision?
- Who could undermine the decision?
- Who is committed to resolving this issue?
- Who will be committed to following the process, including attending meetings, gathering information, and other practical, logistical, and tactical requirements of the process?
- Who is affected by the decision? Is there a part of the community that is already suffering from health impacts of other projects? Will this project create a greater burden on that part of the community?

At the end of this assessment, you should have built a comprehensive stakeholder list. This forms the foundation for your outreach and ensures that you are reaching the full range of community interests throughout the project. This list should grow throughout the process as more stakeholders are identified and become interested. It is important to identify reliable means for communicating with each stakeholder.

Build relationships

Once you have identified the full range of interests that need to be engaged and have specific groups and individuals that are representative of those interests, it is important to begin the process of understanding your stakeholders and relationship-building.

No effective participation process can be designed without first learning about and developing some level of relationship with the stakeholders that will be engaged. Meeting with stakeholders at the beginning of a project will help you to know your public, make them more accepting of you and the information you provide, and help you to design a public participation program that responds to their needs and concerns.

Conduct stakeholder interviews

The most direct and effective process is to engage in extensive stakeholder interviews during the project planning stage. Try to reach a diverse set of stakeholders representing all of the interests that you have identified.

The interview process involves going directly to your stakeholders and asking them about their concerns, interests, and values. Get to know them as people and let them get to know you as well. It is important to understand how your stakeholders view your project and why. A guide to designing these interviews can be seen in the situation assessment section. Identify and plan possible cultural and language differences in the community before conducting stakeholder interviews.

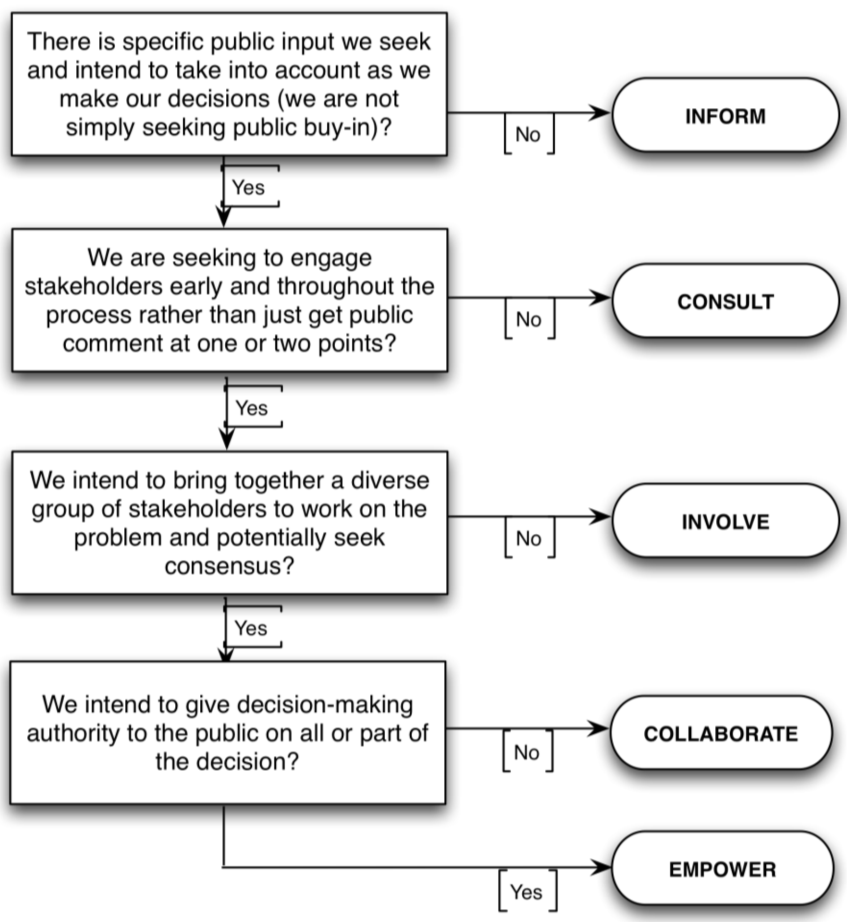
Step 3. Select an Appropriate Level of Public Participation

The different levels of public participation are described in Section 4. There is no “right” level of public participation. For each project, agencies must consider the circumstances, their willingness and ability to share power, and the nature of the stakeholders' desire and need to participate.

As a rule of thumb, it is a good idea to try to meet the participation needs and desires of key stakeholders. Stakeholders who are shut out of a process that is important to them will not simply go away. Rather, they will look for other venues – such as legal, political, or media – in which to influence the decision.

However, in no circumstance should an agency ever commit to participation at a level higher than the decision-makers are willing or able to engage stakeholders.

The following flowchart can be useful in understanding your intent and matching that to an appropriate level of public participation. You can also think about additional questions to ask yourself at each stage.



For accessibility purposes, the FLOW CHART TEXT from the previous page is provided below.

Is there specific public input we seek and intend to take into account as we make our decisions (we are not simply seeking public buy-in)?

If the answer is NO, then your level of public participation is **INFORM**. If the answer is YES, then move to the next question:

Are we seeking to engage stakeholders early and throughout the process rather than just get public comment at one or two points?

If the answer is NO, then your level of public participation is **CONSULT**. If the answer is YES, then move to the next question:

Do we intend to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to work on the problem and potentially seek consensus?

If the answer is NO, then your level of public participation is **INVOLVE**. If the answer is YES, then move to the final question:

Do we intend to give decision-making authority to the public on all or part of the decision?

If the answer is NO, then your level of public participation is **COLLABORATE**. If the answer is YES, then your level of public participation is **EMPOWER**.

Once you identify the right level of public participation for your project, remember that you must develop a clear goal statement for public participation so that everyone on the team has the same understanding of the role of the public.

You must also prepare a clear promise to the public, so that all stakeholders understand their potential for influence on the decision and what they can expect from you as the process progresses.

Step 4. Integrate Public Participation in the Decision Process

In order to have clear and meaningful public participation, it is important for all stakeholders to fully understand the decision process being used. Creating a visual representation of this process is helpful. Both internal and external stakeholders must have the same understanding and expectations regarding the decision process and how and when public input will be obtained. Key points to consider in describing the decision process include:

- What are the key steps and timing in the process?
- At which points will public input be obtained and used?
- How will the public be kept informed throughout the process?
- How will decision criteria be established?
- How will alternatives be developed?
- Who will make the final decision?

Meaningful participation requires that public participation activities be integrated directly into the steps in the decision process. It is essential to start public participation early so that stakeholders and staff are on the same learning curve about issues and development of alternatives and solutions. Most important, it is essential that stakeholders have a common understanding of the problem to be addressed and the criteria that will be used to arrive at a decision. These early activities are critical to getting meaningful input and an overall understanding of the final decision.

Highlight: Communicating with Stakeholders
All public participation requires effective communication with stakeholders. Communication is much more than creating fact sheets or web sites. Three key elements of effective communication include:

- **Relationships**: think about all of the key stakeholders that should be working with you as a sponsor agency and should be working with each other. Use every opportunity to build and strengthen those relationships as you move through your public participation program. Evaluate if there are other spoken languages in the community and possible cultural differences, accommodate accordingly.
- **Information sharing**: any public participation project requires good communication of detailed information. Think about how to create sustainable vehicles for communicating with your stakeholders and durable locations for maintaining and sharing information. Train staff to become better communicators, producing accessible and understandable materials. Create the kind of foundational information about your programs that can be reused consistently over time.
- **Dialogue Spaces**: much traditional public participation does not provide for the types of real dialogue that are necessary for productive interaction and decision-making. Sponsoring agencies need to model the behavior they wish to see in their stakeholders and create the kind of spaces where people can interact successfully. Look for “teachable moments” where it is possible to explain why things worked well

or did not work well from a process standpoint. In this way communities will understand what makes a process successful or not.

Step 5. Match Public Participation Tools to Objectives Throughout the Process

Once the decision process is mapped out, it will become clear where and how the public is to be engaged. At each point that the public is to be informed or provide input, it is important to identify a clear objective for that interaction in order to design an effective process and to maintain clear expectations among all stakeholders.

Only after clear goals and objectives are established can appropriate tools be selected and customized to the circumstances and audience in order to best meet the established objectives. In any given process, a variety of tools will likely be required including:

- Tools to inform
- Tools to generating input
- Tools for consensus-building and agreement seeking.

An overview of these tools is provided in other sections of this toolkit.

(For more resources on planning for public participation, click here)

Public Participation Tools

There are a number of tools or techniques that you can use to implement your public participation process. These include in-person tools (those that involve face-to-face interaction – meetings or workshops, for example) and remote tools (those that do not involve face-to-face interaction – written surveys or websites, for example). This tools section is organized around the fundamental purpose of the tool:

- Tools to Inform the Public -- techniques that you can use to provide members of the public with the information they need to understand the project and decision process
- Tools to Generate and Obtain Input -- techniques that you can use to obtain public input to the decision process
- Tools for Consensus Building and Agreement-Seeking – techniques that you can use to bring diverse groups of stakeholders together to engage in shared learning and decision making.

Each tools page includes questions to consider when selecting a tool and a table of some available tools with information on situations and purposes for which each tool is best suited. Each tool listed in the table contains a link to tipsheet or outside resource that provides a description of the tool, advantages and challenges associated with the tool, and principles for successful planning.

Tools to Inform the Public

Tools to inform the public include techniques that you can use to provide members of the public with the information they need to understand the project, the decision process, and also to provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. These tools take many forms and are applicable to all levels of public participation. Stakeholders do not have to be physically present for inform tools to work well. In fact, one of the most popular tools to inform, the public meeting, is actually one of the least effective in that it reaches very few stakeholders and is often not designed to meet the needs of those who are present.

Tools to inform involve a wide variety of venues and approaches. However, when considering which public participation tools to use, you need to be mindful of the unique cultural attributes of the communities the sponsor agency serves and select the tools accordingly. Some factors to consider might include:

- What existing communication networks are available to share information?
- What forms of information are more likely to resonate with the target populations and therefore be most effective?
- Are there multiple languages in the community? How will you accommodate these languages?
- What is the literacy level of the community? Will they understand the information you are trying to convey?
- Are there types of communication that will not work with the target audiences?
- Are there communication vehicles or media outlets that are considered to be more trustworthy than others and that would be good vehicles for sharing information?

In selecting and designing tools to inform, it is important to consider the following:

- Who needs the information?
- What is the target audience's current level of knowledge and understanding about the project?
- What information is needed for the public to be able to understand and provide meaningful input to the project? What are the most direct and effective ways to communicate this information?
- What are the public's preferences for receiving information?

A low-trust situation may call for an entirely different tool than one where trust is abundant. In extremely low trust situations, you might want to consider partnering with a trusted third party individual or group to help create and distribute information. Your choice of tool will also be influenced by the number of involved stakeholders or participants and the specific location or point in the decision process.

When trying to inform a large group of people or an entire community, you may need to rely more on mass media and the internet to ensure full access to information. However, in some settings trust in mass media is lacking and internet access problematic, so other ways of reaching the public may be more appropriate. When working with smaller groups involved in consensus-building efforts, you are more likely to use in-person and hands-on types of communication.

In most cases, you will need to use multiple tools to effectively reach all audiences.

In-person Tools to Inform

If you determine that you should have an in-person event to provide information to the public, consider the following questions when selecting your tools.

- **What is the purpose or goal of the event?** Purpose or goal should always drive your choice of tool.
- **How many attendees are you expecting?** Smaller numbers of attendees allow for more flexibility in the design of the in-person event and can provide for more interaction among attendees.
- **Do you want attendees to interact with one another to share information and ideas, or only with the sponsor?** If attendees want to interact with one another, then the event should allow for small group conversations and interaction.
- **How much time and/or other resources do you have to prepare for the event?** All in-person events require time and planning. Typically, more time and resources are required to plan and implement tools that involve more intensive interaction among stakeholders.

The following table lists some basic in-person public participation tools for informing sharing.

In-Person Tools to Inform

Tools	# of Parties	Best Suited For
Public Meetings	Limited by room size.	Smaller communities and communities where stakeholders are willing to attend meetings.
Briefings	Generally designed for smaller groups	Reaching out to established groups.
Telephone contacts	Generally one person at a time	All projects, but require sufficient manpower to answer and/or return calls

Remote Tools to Inform
If you determine that you do not need to have an in-person event to provide public information, consider the following questions when selecting your tools.

- Who are you trying to reach and what are the best venues and formats to distribute information?
- To what degree do interested stakeholders have access to and/or use the internet?
- What resources do you have to distribute information and what is the most efficient use of those resources to reach the maximum number of stakeholders?
- What opportunities or partners exist in the community that could assist in the distribution and/or development of information?
- What languages and literacy level are most appropriate?

The following table lists some basic remote public participation tools for informing sharing.

Remote Tools to Inform

Tools	# of Parties	Best Suited For
Fact Sheets	Unlimited, but printing and mailing costs could be a consideration	All projects and audiences except where literacy is an issue.
Web sites	Unlimited	All projects and audiences where access is available. Literacy issues can be overcome by using voice and video.
Information Repositories	Unlimited, but can be geographically constrained by location.	Localized projects where access to a physical site is possible. Repositories can also be established on-line.
Newsletters or Bulletins	Unlimited, but printing and mailing costs could be a consideration.	Projects with manageable numbers of stakeholders if printing and mailing are to be done.
Information Kiosks	Unlimited, but geographically constrained by location.	Local projects.
Press and media	Unlimited	Larger projects of widespread interest; use of press and media

		should form part of the overall communication strategy

Non-traditional Tools to Inform

In addition to tools commonly associated with public participation, a range of "non-traditional" tools exists for reaching the public. While these tools may not be considered traditional from a public participation perspective, they are in fact traditional information-sharing mechanisms in many social andcultural contexts.

The appropriateness of the tools described below is entirely dependent on the social context of public participation. These tools can be loosely grouped into two forms: performance and messaging.

- Performance includes plays, dances, puppetry, poetry, song, and other formats that provide information relevant to important pending decisions, opportunities to participate in the decision process, and/or the importance of public participation. Performance tools use story-telling as the basis for creating and communicating information. Unlike many conventional public participation tools, performance often involves an affective or emotional dimension to information sharing. As such, it communicates by appealing to intuition and feelings rather than by strict logical persuasion. Performance is often effective in that it brings information directly into the community, it entertains as it communicates, and often engages people directly in the process.

- Messaging involves using mechanisms to reach people "where they are." These mechanisms include the use of vehicles with public address systems to broadcast messages as they drive through the streets or the use of electronic signs that are posted at strategic locations. Both vehicles and electronic signs impart important information about pending decisions, locations where more information can be obtained, and/or opportunities for providing input to the decision process.

(For more resources on tools to inform the public, click here)

Tools to Generate and Obtain Public Input

Tools to generate public input are techniques that you can use to obtain public input to the decision process. Through use of these tools you provide opportunities to members of the public to share information and express their opinions and perspectives for consideration in decision making. These tools take many forms and are applicable to all levels of public participation except Inform.

When selecting a tool, it's important to match it to the participation situation and goal. Don't always assume a public meeting is appropriate simply because that's what you're accustomed to doing. Rather, think carefully about the purpose of the participation event and select the tool based on that purpose and the attributes of your particular situation. A low-trust situation may call for an entirely different tool than one where trust is abundant. Similarly, the number of involved stakeholders or participants and where you are in the decision process will also influence your choice of tools.

In addition to considering your public participation goal and situation, one of the first questions you should think about when selecting a tool for obtaining input is whether you need to gather people together in-person to collect their input. You should consider having an in-person event or meeting if you answer yes to any of the following questions.

- Are you required to have some form of public meeting or hearing at this juncture of the decision process?
- Do you need to present information to the public and be available to answer questions about, or receive comments on, the presentation?
- Do stakeholders or members of the public need or want to hear or learn from other perspectives?
- Do you need to build trust among stakeholders?
- Do you want stakeholders to engage with you and one-another in problem-solving?
- Are there marginalized parts of the community that may need additional outreach to ensure their opinions are heard?

In-person Tools for Input

If you determine that your situation or decision would benefit from having an in-person event to collect input, consider the following questions to select an appropriate input tool.

- **What is the purpose or goal of the event?** Purpose or goal should always drive your choice of input tool.
- **How many attendees are you expecting?** Smaller numbers of attendees allow for more flexibility in the design of the in-person event and can provide for more interaction among attendees.

- **Do attendees want to have their comments as part of the public record?** Formal public meetings or hearings typically allow attendees to make formal comment that can become part of the public record.
- **Do you want attendees to interact with one another, or only with the decision maker?** If attendees want to interact with one another, then the event should allow for small group conversations and should not allow only one person at a time to make formal comment. If relationship building is important, you should select a tool that allows for more interaction across stakeholder groups and interests.
- **Do you want stakeholders to respond to a proposal?** If you're seeking comment on a proposal, public meetings, hearings, or those that involve computer-assisted processes might be appropriate.
- **Do you want stakeholders to work together to develop options or alternatives for consideration?** Interactive and intensive processes, such as workshops or charrettes, are useful tools for stakeholders to work together to develop specific alternatives.
- **How much time and/or other resources do you have to prepare for the event?** All in-person events require time and planning. Typically, more time and resources are required to plan and implement tools that involve more intensive interaction among stakeholders.

The following table lists some basic in-person tools for obtaining public input.

In-Person Tools for Generating Input

Event Type	# of Attendees	Best Suited for
Interviews	Individual or small group	Learning about individual perspectives on issues
Focus Groups	Small groups (15 or fewer)	Exploring attitudes and opinions in depth
Study Circles	Small (5-20)	Information sharing and focused dialogue
Public Meetings/ Hearings	Large groups	Presenting information to and receiving comments or feedback from the public
Public Workshops	Multiple small groups (8 – 15 in each small group)	Exchanging information and/or problem-solving in small groups.
Appreciative Inquiry Processes	Varies, but usually involves "whole system"	Envisioning shared future, not making decisions
World Cafes	Very adaptable, involving multiple simultaneous conversations (4-8 in each small group)	Fostering open discussion of a topic and identifying areas of common ground

Charrettes	Small to medium	Generating comprehensive plans or alternatives
Computer-Assisted Processes	Large	Receiving real-time quantitative feedback to ideas or proposals

Other Input Tools
If you determine that you don't need to have an in-person event, consider the following questions when selecting a public input tool.

- **What is the technological capacity/access of stakeholders from whom you want to hear?** This is a threshold question for determining what tools you might use to obtain input. If the stakeholders have access to and the capacity to use computers, then you can use on-line tools to obtain input. If not, you'll need to use other tools, such as phone surveys or paper comment forms/surveys.
- **What type of information are you trying to obtain?** The complexity of the information you're trying to obtain will influence your choice of input tool. It is easier to collect and analyze quantitative than qualitative information. Asking stakeholders to order rank proposed options lends itself to surveys, whether administered by phone, internet, or paper. However, soliciting stakeholder views or concerns on an issue, proposal, or visions for the future typically requires open-ended questions, which are better suited to comment forms. Thorough analysis of public comments requires considerable resources.
- **From how many stakeholders are you seeking to obtain input?** The number of stakeholders from whom you are seeking input will influence the comprehensiveness and creativity of your information collection effort. If you're seeking information from many stakeholders, you may wish to focus on quantitative information that can be easily tabulated. If you are only seeking input from a limited number of stakeholders, you have more flexibility to collect comprehensive qualitative information through comment forms or resident feedback registers.

What resources (time, staff, and funds) can you commit to obtaining stakeholder input? Resources determine what is achievable. It is better to perform limited stakeholder input efforts well than to do large-scale efforts poorly. How will you ensure all voices are heard regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and decisions made through the public participation process?

(For more resources on tools to obtain and generate input, click here)

Tools for Consensus Building and Agreement Seeking

Tools for consensus building include techniques that you can use to bring diverse groups of stakeholders together to engage in shared learning and decision making. These tools are only applicable to the collaboration and empower levels of public participation.

Consensus building is a process and cannot be done quickly. In general, any consensus-building effort requires a consistent set of participants who work together over the duration of the process. It is important for the participants to work and learn together, developing the relationships essential to reaching agreement. This is not possible if participation is not stable. Consensus-building in low-trust situations will take even longer as participants must first develop the trust needed to work together constructively, which is a precursor to reaching agreement.

Consensus building requires that people meet face-to-face. While some activities can occur remotely at points during the process (especially through internet-based video, voice, and document sharing), initial relationship-building and key agreement seeking will require in-person meetings.

Many of the tools to inform and for generating and obtaining input can be used as components of a consensus building process to educate participants, generate dialogue, and identify common ground.

When designing a consensus process, consider the following questions:

- Who needs to be included for the final consensus to be legitimate?
- How will you include a diverse group of stakeholders that are a part of the consensus building process and ensure their voices are heard regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or income?
- Are all key interests willing and able to participate?
- Are there trust or other issues that must be addressed before the process can begin?
- What are the key decisions that must be made to achieve overall consensus?
- What information is necessary for all parties to understand in order to build a viable consensus?
- If the consensus process is not binding, to what degree are decision-makers willing and committed to considering the outcome of the consensus process?

Event Type	**# of Attendees**	**Best Suited for**
Consensus workshops	Up to hundreds	Smaller, less controversial decisions or

		identifying shared values
Advisory boards and similar groups	Small groups (25 or fewer)	Long-term and complex processes
Computer-assisted processes	Large	Decisions that can be well defined into small segments and do not require stakeholders to get to know each other
Citizen juries	Limited, generally around 12	Decisions that can be organized into clear options

(For more resources on tools for consensus building and agreement seeking, click here)

Appreciative Inquiry Process

Description

Appreciative Inquiry is a facilitated process to discover past and current practices that inform and inspire participants as they strive to collaboratively create and implement an ideal future. Unlike many decision-making processes that focus on what is not working, Appreciative Inquiry focuses on what is already working or and where people want to increase what is working. It does not focus on the identification or solving of problems, but rather envisioning and creating a positive future. It involves selecting topics of shared interest for inquiry, conducting structured interviews to bring out stories that reveal the best of the past – or what has worked – and identifying themes to help plan the future. Appreciative Inquiry is a systematic process that uses the art and practice of asking questions and building upon stories to foster innovation and imagination.

Advantages

- Solicits the full participation of stakeholders in mission or vision development, strategic planning, and community development.
- Builds support for change as an ongoing process and not just a one-time event.
- Promotes heart-felt inquiry, discovery, and renewal.
- Supports organizations in transition.

Challenges to Consider

- Because this process is intended to bring the "whole system" together, when using Appreciative Inquiry at the community level it is important to make sure participants are representative of the entire community and that very broad access is created to include as many people as possible.
- Not appropriate where predictable, linear processes and outcomes are required or where the problem identification and problem-solving method for change is preferred.

Principles for Successful Planning

- Provide Appreciative Inquiry training/experience to all team members and decision makers to make sure they are comfortable with the process and open to possible outcomes.
- Convene a coordinating committee that is representative of the public to develop the theme or question to be considered.
- Follow the 4-D cycle for implementing the Appreciative Inquiry process.
    - Discovery: craft questions, develop interview guide, train interviewers, conduct interviews, share stories from interviews about best practices, map the core of the findings.
    - Dream: reflect on a focal question, engage in a dream dialogue, clarify the collective dream, creatively enact the dream, determine common themes, create an organizational dream map and document the dream.
    - Design: identify a meaningful social architecture, select relevant and strategic design elements, identify organizational design preferences, craft provocative propositions.

- Destiny: review, communicate and celebrate accomplishments, generate a list of potential actions, and self-organize for inspired action.

Resources Needed

Staffing

- Facilitator trained in the appreciative inquiry process
- Logistics staff (number needed will depend on group size)

Materials

- Optional laptop computers, printers, copy machine
- Easels and flipcharts (1 for every 6-8 participants)
- Overhead projector
- Microphones for larger groups
- Interpreters, if necessary

Planning Time

- Substantial time may be needed to assemble representative coordinating committee and train committee members in Appreciative Inquiry method
- Planning requires time to develop a detailed schedule of events and organization and advertising for each individual event

Implementation Time

- Vary in length depending on the purpose, organization, and process design. A full four-step process can take several months
- A large Appreciative Inquiry process can be accomplished in a summit-style meeting that gets the "whole system" in the room and lasts a few days

Group Size

- Varies depending on system size. Can accommodate up to 1,000 people.

Cost

- Can vary wildly depending on the size of the group or "system." Most significant expenses are staff time and facility costs.

Most relevant participation level:

- Collaborate

For More Information:
http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/

Briefings

Description

Briefings are generally short presentations provided directly to community groups at their existing meetings or locations – such as social and civic clubs – to provide an overview or update on a project. The presentation may be delivered by the sponsor agency's representative and can be followed by detailed discussions in a question-and-answer format. Briefings are useful as a public information activity when an identified group is going to be affected by a proposal or needs to be kept up to date on issues and activities. Briefings can also be used as a forum for feedback and may provide some preliminary ideas of community issues and values based on the discussion and questions. Accommodations for different languages and literacy levels should be made when planning.

Advantages

- Informs stakeholders of a project, product, or proposal and provides them with a chance to ask questions
- Keeps key stakeholder groups informed and involved in a less formal and expensive process than large public meetings
- Can be held more frequently than larger public meetings
- Generally used with existing groups who hold meetings or are willing to add agenda topics to an existing meeting or to organize a special session to get information about the project
- Provides a forum to interact directly with a particular group and allows tailored presentations to explain issues, circumstances, and implications unique to the group, and to get feedback and input on what is important to the community
- Allows sponsor to reach groups and individuals who may not attend other types of meetings
- Are informal and help to build community good will and create a more effective atmosphere for dialogue and responding to specific questions

Challenges to Consider

- Make sure that all groups are treated equally
- Briefings should not be treated as public relations to convince specific groups of your proposal or to pit groups against each other
- Individuals conducting briefings should be well versed in the project and be able to answer questions, but also open and approachable to help build community relationships
- Stakeholders may be disappointed if the briefing is used only as a means to inform them and not also to answer their questions and get input to their ideas, interests and concerns

Principles for Successful Planning

- Manage expectations of the audience by stating a clear purpose and agenda at the outset.
- Stay within guidelines and constraints provided by the host organization
- Don't just favor one or two key groups; get out in the community and work to identify a full range of organizations

- Reach out directly to groups and make personal contact with offers for a briefing; it is important to accommodate group/community needs as much as possible
- Clarify whether the groups are willing to promote the event, and whether you need to provide promotional material (flyers, posters, newsletter articles)
- Know your audience in advance; be sure not to make the presentation too technical
- Do not use briefings as a forum for making decisions or reaching consensus
- Questions, concerns, and issues of stakeholders should be recorded.
- Provide a summary of what you heard at the end
- Prepare presentation materials in light of the specific interests of the target audience
- Leave behind information about your project that attendees can share with others
- Bring refreshments if not already provided
- Offer to offset any special costs your presentation might entail
- Prepare and bring printed material and background information
- Make presentations engaging, fun, and concise
- Bring visuals if possible, especially hands-on materials, and talk about case studies or personal experiences to illustrate the points you want to make
- Record all input and comments; summarize what you have heard at the end of the meeting and let participants know what you will do with their input and what to expect next in the process, especially opportunities for ongoing participation
- Acknowledge past exclusion of certain groups and how project is an opportunity to move forward in a meaningful way

Resources Needed

<u>Staffing</u>

- Staff to develop briefing and handouts
- Presenter and one or two support staff to attend meeting

<u>Materials</u>

- Data projectors, laptops, screens
- Flipcharts, tape, and markers
- Presentations, fact sheets, agendas
- Demonstrations, models, giveaways
- Comment forms

<u>Planning Time</u>

- Effective briefings should be carefully planned but can generally be done in a few days
- It could take several months to coordinate with all the different groups that desire briefings; not all groups meet frequently or on a regular schedule

Implementation Time

- Briefings are generally short, often less than an hour including dialogue time

Group Size

- Briefings are generally designed for smaller audiences, though can be adjusted
- Limit the number of staff that attend a briefing as you do not want to overwhelm the meeting.

Cost

- Briefings are generally very low cost.

Most relevant participation levels:

- Briefings can be held at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

Charrettes

Description

A charrette is an intensive, multi-disciplinary workshop with the aim of developing a design or vision for a project or planning activity. Charrettes are often conducted to design such things as parks and buildings, or to plan communities or transportation systems. A team of design experts meets with community groups, developers, and neighbors over a period lasting from one day to a couple of weeks, gathering information on the issues that face the community. Charrette participants then work together to find design solutions that will address the issues that stakeholders have identified as priorities and result in a clear, detailed, realistic vision for future development.

Advantages

- Facilitates collaborative design of visible projects that will have high impact on people's lives
- Brings project stakeholders together to facilitate fast and interactive decision making
- Creates partnerships and positive working relationships with the public
- Especially useful for land-use planning or other issues that require speculation about the future
- Can save money where many drawings are needed in a short time; rather than commissioning expensive design drawings without input from the community, a charrette offers an inclusive, less expensive process

Challenges to Consider

- This specialized tool is only applicable to scenarios where a high level of public awareness and input is needed and welcomed
- The process is intensive and can be expensive, usually lasting several days and involving experts and specialists, including a trained charrette facilitator
- A compressed time period and multi-day requirement means some stakeholders may not be able to attend
- Charrettes may not provide adequate time provided for reflection and design refinement
- Take care to make sure that participants are seen as fully representative of the larger public

Principles for Successful Planning

- Design tailored, participant-appropriate approaches to the charrette process
- Begin as early as possible and bring people face-to-face
- Invite broad participation – all those directly impacted, all those indirectly impacted, and all the decision-makers
- Set attainable charrette goals and identify future milestones, as appropriate

- Brief the participants on the charrette process, which aims at delivering feasible and creative solutions within a short period of time
- Hire a trained design charrette facilitator, who can help form teams and small groups, obtain quick agreement on desired outcomes, and keep everyone involved in the process
- Plan for a workshop that provides sufficient time for the participants to work intensively on a problem and then present their findings
- If possible, have the top decision maker present to welcome participants and validate the importance of their participation
- Provide – and use - high-quality, legitimate information; high-quality information provides a basis for meaningful participation. Legitimate information is that which all participants view as valid and pertinent
- Address participants' information needs promptly and as comprehensively as possible
- Form small working groups; groups may discuss one general topic at a time or may be assigned differing topics
- The process operates with general sessions, small work groups, report backs to the large group, and feedback sessions with, or presentations from technical staff or decision makers
- Decision makers work with participants to achieve reasonable and feasible decisions, by identifying reasonable constraints, teaching relevant design principles, and offering professionals insights to the ramifications of different design approaches
- Groups address issues or topics by focusing on how to meet different interests and creating joint criteria for successful designs
- The highest-ranking decision maker closes the event by stating how the charrette's outcomes will be incorporated into the final decision

Resources Needed

Staffing

- A leader experienced in the charrette technique
- Staff who have worked on the problem or with applicable policy and can provide needed technical information
- A planner, landscape designer, and/or architect, depending on the design issue being discussed

Materials

- Large maps
- Overlays to allow sketching on maps
- Boards to display applicable data
- Large newsprint pads and markers to record ideas
- Photographs of sites
- Handouts of basic goals/time limits/meeting ground rules
- Printed background information with background data

Planning Time

- May require several months of planning and preparation

Implementation Time

- Requires at least one-half day for modest issue and up to several days for complex issues

Group Size

- Can accommodate groups of varying sizes. A medium size group is 10 – 50 persons, and a large group is 50-100 persons

Cost

- High, generally requires outside expertise and development of myriad materials

Most relevant participation levels

- Most relevant to Involve, Collaborate, Empower

For More Information

http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/BuildingBlocks4_1.pdf

Citizen Advisory Boards

Description

Citizen advisory boards are known by many names—boards, committees, groups, task forces, etc. Citizen advisory boards consist of a representative group of stakeholders from a particular community appointed to provide comments and advice on a project or issue.

Boards generally meet on a regular schedule over a period of time to develop a detailed knowledge of the project and issues and to share their relevant perspectives, ideas, concerns, and interests. Boards often work to identify areas of common ground and/or consensus recommendations.

Advantages

- Provides broad-based input into planning and decision-making from a range of stakeholder interests that are affected by a proposal or issue
- May work over time to generate in-depth knowledge and ownership of a project or issue in a way that less intensive efforts cannot achieve
- Allows for the in-depth and focused involvement and input of a wide range of stakeholders, including often marginalized communities
- Allows for development of consensus (where achievable) and detailed recommendations for action on complex issues that affect the broader community
- Allows for in-depth understanding of project issues among stakeholders represented on the board
- Provides opportunities for exploring alternative strategies and building on commonalities and alliances
- Provides for a detailed analysis of project issues, timelines and deliverables and a focus on the outcomes
- Enables participants to gain an understanding of other perspectives leading toward common ground for recommendations

Challenges to Consider

- Convening must be done in such a way as to result in a fair and balanced group that is widely perceived to represent the community at large
- The range of interests must be broad enough to represent all those affected, and members must possess the relevant background and skills to assist in addressing the problem at hand
- Boards must be provided a meaningful role in the decision process and should not be viewed as a rubber stamp
- Participants must be willing to work together on a common challenge
- Sponsors must be aware of potential conflicts among stakeholders to ensure that key issues are addressed early in the process
- A clear mission, charter, and ground rules need to be agreed to by all members
- The sponsor should work closely with the board to ensure that it does not take on an agenda that is not within the context of the project or range of public influence

- Individual members' comments to the media may not coincide with the board's decisions or the sponsor's policies; a set of principles can be developed to provide guidelines on members' comments to and interactions with the media
- The general public may not embrace committee recommendations unless the committee keeps the public informed of developments and progress being made throughout the process
- It is not always possible to achieve consensus
- Can be very time and labor intensive if the issue is significant

Principles for Successful Planning

- Conduct a thorough stakeholder analysis and convene the board such that all relevant community interests are fairly represented in its membership
- Select a strong chairperson who understands good process; avoid putting the loudest or most opinionated stakeholder in the chair position
- Avoid alternative and backup representatives, as full and continuous participation is generally needed to build the understanding and relationships required for consensus building
- Get agreement of all members on a clear mission for the advisory board and the requirements of member participation
- The sponsor should work closely with the board throughout its life and be careful not to let the board spend a lot of time developing recommendations that have no chance of being accepted
- Use experienced neutral third-party facilitators to manage the overall board process
- Set expectations to ensure that members continually communicate with their constituents to keep the larger community informed and engaged throughout the process
- Do not rush the process, it takes time for board members to build relationships and trust and become fully informed enough about the project in order to develop meaningful results
- Maintain regular contact between board activities and the broader community; seek opportunities for broader public interaction with the board
- Record decisions and keep a running summary of board deliberations, make sure all decisions are supported by a clear and detailed rationale to share with the broader public
- Produce a detailed final report of recommendations including a thorough rationale for decisions

Resources Needed:

<u>Staffing</u>

- Facilitator
- Administrative and logistical support
- Technical project support to develop briefing papers and information
- Independent technical experts

Materials
- Regular meeting venues
- Briefing books, presentations and materials
- Tours
- Refreshments
- Child care

Planning Time
- Convening an advisory board may take several months to identify, invite, and confirm members
- Care should be taken to have a formational meeting to ensure all members agree to mission and process of the board
- Well functioning advisory boards require a great deal of time and effort to prepare for each meeting

Implementation Time
- Advisory boards generally meet once per month for several hours up to full-day meetings
- It generally takes 12 to 18 months for most boards to address issues and develop recommendations; complex and controversial projects can take significantly longer

Group size
- Most boards range from 12 to 25 persons in size
- Boards larger than 20 persons are difficult to facilitate, however it is more important to ensure that all key community interests are represented rather than to try to find the ideal size

Cost
- Boards can be very expensive to form and manage.
- Independent facilitation is essential and independent technical support is also often required
- Boards also need a great deal of administrative support

Most relevant participation levels
- Most appropriate at higher levels of the spectrum, particularly involve, collaborate and empower
- It generally makes little sense to ask stakeholders to contribute the level of effort required of a board if the agency is not interested and committed to serious consideration of consensus recommendations

For More Information
http://www.epa.gov/superfund/community/cag/pdfs/cagtlktc.pdf

Citizen Juries

Description

Citizen juries involve creating a "jury" a representative sample of citizens (usually selected in a random or stratified manner) who are briefed in detail on the background and current thinking relating to a particular issue or project. The issue they are asked to consider will be one that has an effect across the community and where a representative and democratic decision-making process is required. The "jury" is presented with a range of possible alternatives. Citizen jurors consider the alternatives and make a judgment as to the most attractive alternative for the community. They present their decision as they would in legal juries, often in the form of a report. The report may include recommendations for future actions or directions. In most cases, the responsible agency agrees in advance that it will implement whatever decision the citizen jury makes.

Citizen juries involve the wider community in the decision-making process in a representative fashion. Participants are engaged as citizens with no formal alignments or allegiances. The randomly selection is intended to prevent strong advocates for any particular outcome to lobby for inclusion. Citizen jurors are expected to bring with them an intrinsic worth in the good sense and wisdom born of their own knowledge and personal experience. Citizen juries provide the opportunity to add to that knowledge and to exchange ideas with their fellow citizens. The result is a collective one, in which each juror has a valuable contribution to make.

Advantages

- Can be used to broker a conflict, or to provide a transparent and non-aligned viewpoint
- Are intended to complement other forms of consultation rather than replace them; public input on values, concerns, and issues should be part of the "evidence" provided to juries
- Can be used to draw members of the community into participative processes where the community is distanced from the decision-making process or a process is not seen as being democratic
- Strives to improve representation in participative processes by engaging a cross section of the community in the jury
- Provides a transparent participatory process which can be seen to be independent and credible
- Provides a public democracy mechanism
- Provides citizens with an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of the issue
- Involves ordinary citizens
- Helps to gauge public reaction and opinion

Challenges to Consider

- A fair and transparent process for selecting jurors is particularly important; jury members must be representative of the community in consideration, and must be perceived as such by the broader

community--make sure to include parts of the community that may have been previously excluded
- Everyone involved needs to be clear about the results and how they will be used.
- Ahead of the event, time needs to be allowed to empanel the jury, hire a facilitator, put together briefing or background papers, and contact "experts" to provide testimony regarding the different options
- Preparation also includes developing presentations on alternatives, engaging the experts and other witnesses, and timing everyone's participation, as it can take several days to run the jury
- The sponsor must follow recommendations or explain why not. To go against the jury's recommendations could have significant ramifications for the credibility of the sponsor and on future engagement efforts in the community

Principles for Successful Planning
- Select a broadly representative group of approximately 8-12 people Determine a question important to the issue being considered or develop a series of options for the jury to consider
- Because of the random nature of selection and the time commitment, jurors are often paid a fee
- Brief jurors on the rules of the proceedings, and allow them two-to-four days to develop a recommendation
- Provide expert witnesses to brief the jury, be cross-examined by the jury, and spend time discussing the issue with the jury
- Engage independent moderator(s) to assist the process of deliberation
- At the agreed time, arrange a presentation from the panel and/or collect the jury's report, which should outline its recommendations
- Hold the jury in a large enough venue to allow for an audience, consider videotaping and/or televising the proceeding.
- Publish the jury report and recommendations; it is essential to have widespread communication about the process and results.
- If the recommendations of the citizen jury are not accepted, a detailed rationale is essential

Resources Needed

<u>Staffing</u>
- Moderator/facilitator of overall process
- Staff to select, brief, and manage jurors
- Expert witnesses
- Staff to prepare information on alternatives
- Press and communications staff to widely advertise proceedings
- Videographer

<u>Materials</u>
- Venue reservation with appropriate space and furniture
- Refreshments appropriate to time, effort and audience (the jury needs to be fed)
- Data projectors, laptops, screens

- Flipcharts, tape, and markers
- Sound system with cordless microphones
- Presentations, posters, models
- Video equipment
- Information notebooks for jurors

Planning Time
- Effective citizen juries take months to plan

Implementation Time
- Juries can last multiple days to present evidence and then additional days for jury deliberation and report preparation.

Group Size
- The juries themselves are very small, but are designed to engage much broader interest from the whole community.

Cost
- Costs for juries can be quite high to prepare all of the information required, and engage experts and facilitators.

Most relevant participation levels
- Juries are typically designed at the empower level as the jury decision is expected to be implemented by the sponsor agency.

For More Information:
http://www.jefferson-center.org
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/peals/dialogues/juries.htm

Computer-Assisted Processes

Description

Computer-assisted processes use computer-based tools to facilitate interaction and documentation at large group forums. Examples include keypad polling or networked computers, where individuals enter responses to questions on numerical keypads or networked computers and the composite results are displayed. These processes are best used in large settings. They encourage everyone to participate, provide for real-time input and displaying of the results of that input, and allow for obtaining as much quantitative information as possible in a given time frame.

Participants in computer-assisted processes express preferences to several scenarios. They press buttons corresponding to questions associated with the scenario, using a preference scale to respond to a question, e.g., high to low, like to dislike, one to five, etc. The questions have been carefully selected and sequenced to allow analysts to infer preferences and/or special interests among the scenarios and discussion topics. From the voting, reports may be provided instantaneously or only votes collected instantaneously, with the results presented at a later time through a pre-arranged feedback mechanism. More sophisticated methods allow for the real-time adjustment of subsequent scenarios based on the immediate responses of voters.

Advantages

- Encourages participation because voting is anonymous
- Useful when seeking preferences quickly from an audience
- Allows for real-time input and immediate feedback in large group settings
- Honors minority views
- Discourages individuals from dominating the group process
- Facilitates documentation at large group forums
- Can be used with other parts of the project or plan development cycle to improve the agency's understanding of community preferences

Challenges to Consider

- Are expensive to implement and often require technical support
- Software can limit design options
- Emphasizes quantitative data at the expense of qualitative information
- Only takes the opinions of those voting, which may cause for skewed interpretation of preferences and results
- Participants may be reluctant to use the devices for fear of new technology, accuracy, anonymity, or similar factors
- May not be appropriate for all communities

Principles for Successful Planning

- It is important to not let the technology drive the participation process. The choice of technique and who participates should depend on the objectives of the public involvement process.
- Determining appropriate representation is critical. Participants may be selected to be representative of a special subpopulation or representative of the more general population. At other times, there maybe no pre-selection or screening of voters and those who have access to the devices or voting sites are allowed to cast a preference
- The questions to which participants respond have to be well-structured and specific to obtain useful information
- Computer-assisted processes can be stand-alone events to obtain public input on preferences, or the information obtained through computer-assisted processes can serve as the baseline or foundation for stakeholder dialogues.

Resources

Staffing

- A team is needed to plan for and organize the large public forum
- A facilitator
- Technical staff to support the computer-assisted process

Materials

- Computers and software
- Voting keypads for all participants
- Meeting venue to hold large numbers of participants
- Large screens for projecting results

Planning Time

- Computer-assisted process can require substantial planning time to determine who should participate; the kinds of questions that will yield important information; to obtain, pilot, and trouble-shoot the technology; and to secure a large meeting venue

Implementation Time

- Computer-assisted processes typically last up to a day. Analyzing the results can take longer

Group Size

- Only limited by size of the room and availability of technology.

Cost

- Typically high due to large number of participants and the need for computers, software, keypads and on-site technical support

Most relevant participation levels:

- Consult, Involve, Collaborate

Consensus Workshops

Description

A consensus conference is a type of public meeting that allows stakeholders to be involved in assessing an issue or proposal and working together to find common ground and deliver consensus-based input. The conference is a dialogue between experts and citizens. It is open to the public and the media. This is an opportunity to include all stakeholders, especially marginalized communities.

Formal consensus conferences are generally two to four days and include the following activities:

- Panelists hear experts' responses to questions
- After hearing these responses, panelists ask follow-up questions
- The audience is given an opportunity to ask questions
- The panel deliberates and prepares a position statement to achieve consensus on the issue
- Panelists present outcomes
- Planning committee prepares a report of the outcomes and distributes to panelists, media, and decision-making bodies

The citizens panel plays the leading role by formulating questions to be taken up at the conference and participating in the selection of experts to answer them. The citizen panel has two weekends for this preparation. The expert panel is selected in a way that ensures that essential opposing views and professional conflicts can emerge and be discussed at the conference. An advisory/planning committee has the overall responsibility for making sure that all rules of a democratic, fair, and transparent process have been followed. Consensus conferences have mostly been used where the topic being investigated concerns management, science, or technology. They require a strict adherence to the rules of implementation to be successful. Where members of the community feel their views go unheard, the consensus conference offers an exciting participatory technique for democratic participation.

Advantages

- Gives members of the community a chance to have their say on community issues, increase their knowledge of and ability to participate in such a discussion, and come to one position statement that all participants can "own."
- At the end of a consensus conference, the outcome should be a position statement that reflects the joint decision(s) of all participants on an issue or proposal
- Assists in the facilitation of public debate from a range of perspectives
- Empowers lay people to develop an informed understanding and make some contribution to the development of policy on a sensitive topic
- Demonstrates a plurality of views on issues
- Bridges the gap between experts and lay people, including previously excluded members of the community.
- Can develop new knowledge

Challenges to Consider

- High costs for set up and recruitment of participants and staging the event
- The conference would run for a two-to-four day period and therefore can be costly
- The process of panelist selection can be difficult and a stakeholder assessment must be performed to determine the relevant groups that should participate; this will ensure that representation from the relevant groups is achieved
- For the citizen panel, need to recruit members who are representative and from a wide range of backgrounds rather than members of the community who are usually present in participatory processes
- Strict adherence to the implementation rules is required for the conference to be successful
- The formal nature of the tool can restrict impartiality
- Rapid production of reports and findings is required
- Choice of an effective facilitator is critical to the success of the conference

Principles for Successful Planning

- Select an advisory/planning committee to have the overall responsibility for making sure that all rules of a democratic, fair, and transparent process have been followed
- Organize a public meeting and advertise the venue, time and topic to the public, experts in the field to be discussed, the media and appropriate decision-making bodies
- Select participants for the citizen panel, ensuring a representative sample of the geographic area and/or relevant community groups (about 14 people)
- Hire a professional facilitator to work with the citizen panel during its preparation
- Book suitable venues for the citizen panel to meet over two weekends to work with a facilitator to formulate the questions to be taken up at the conference and participate in the selection of experts to answer the questions
- With the help of the citizen panel, select the expert panel in a way that ensures that essential opposing views and professional conflicts can emerge and be discussed at the conference. Good experts are not only knowledgeable but also open-minded and good communicators with an overview of their field

Resources Needed

<u>Staff</u>

- Moderator/facilitator
- Experts
- Recorders
- Administrative and logistical support
- Photographer/videographer

Materials

- Publicity
- Venue and appropriate furniture
- Refreshments
- Audio and visual recording and amplification
- Data projectors
- Video
- Projection screen
- Props for working in groups (pens, paper, pins, etc.)
- Child care
- Interpretation, if necessary

Planning Time

- There is significant planning involved and can take several months.

Implementation Time

- Two-to-four days in general.

Group size

- Limited number of panelists but a large audience can also attend and participate.

Cost

- Relatively high because of the large number of staff required.

Most relevant participation levels

- Most appropriate at higher levels of participation, particularly collaboration.

For More Information

http://www.ethicaltools.info/content/ET4%20Manual%20CC%20(Binnenwerk%2040p).pdf

Electronic Democracy

Description

Electronic democracy describes a wide range of interactive tools that embrace existing and emergent media sources as a forum for allowing members of the public to express opinions and seek to influence decision-making within their community, state, country, or globally. Electronic democracy can be achieved through older technology, such as television and radio, and newer technologies, such at the internet, cell phones, and electronic polling systems. These newer technologies are widely used participatory tools. Massive numbers of stakeholders can access information and provide direct input through the internet. Large groups can also provide real-time input at public meetings through electronic polling devices (see computer-assisted processes).

Advantages

- Aims to engage more members of the public in expressing their opinions on a website, via email, or through other electronic communications options, in order to influence planning and decision-making
- Increases the number and variety of people who exercise their democratic rights through comments sent to decision-making bodies with regard to proposals and issues
- Creates a virtual public space where people can interact, discuss issues and share ideas
- Allows citizens to participate at their own convenience
- Can reach very large audiences with relative ease and little cost
- Facilitates interactive communication
- Disseminates large amounts of information effectively and without distortion

Challenges to Consider

- Can exclude participation by those not online
- Results can be manipulated therefore results of on-line polls should be carefully considered
- Enormous amounts of input will require significant time and effort to synthesize and make sense of the input
- People can become disillusioned if the project is "over-hyped;" keep expectations realistic
- Encourage electronic conferencing among participants in an interactive forum to help the project moves beyond mere broadcasting to build an on-line, participatory open space
- Avoid list servers that automatically reply to all; email lists with many active subscribers generate so much information that they drive people away

Principles for Successful Planning

- Establish a detailed website providing information about the project and links to other sites that may provide background information to help to ensure that input is informed
- Keep your site well organized and up to date

- Use standard HTML formatting to make the site as inclusive as possible
- Provide details of subscribe/unsubscribe procedures
- Set up your own on-line dialogue through your website.
- Counting the number of people who visit the site can provide useful data for authorities who need to know how many people are concerned and what kinds of issues are of concern to the community
- Investigate whether government news groups offer newsgroup space for local electronic democracy projects; newsgroups provide the core of information exchange and global topical discussions
- Don't forget to let the traditional media know about your e-democracy project, an article in the news (radio, television or print) will let people know of your project and its address

Resources Needed

Staff
- IT staff

Material
- Online service providers
- Computers and programs to build, update, and receive input

Planning Time
- Can take many months to design, program, and initiate.

Implementation Time
- Websites should be maintained throughout the life of the project.
- Input periods should be clearly defined and well advertised.

Group size
- Unlimited

Cost
- Relatively low cost for the range of input achieved.

Most relevant participation levels
- Can be used at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

For More Information
http://www.well.com/user/hlr/electrondemoc.html

Focus Group

Description

A focus group is a small group discussion with professional leadership. Focus groups are used to find out what issues are of most concern for a community or group when little or no information is available. Discovering these issues can help determine preferred options for addressing the issues or what concerns would prevent a proposal from going ahead. The focus group may also be undertaken to discover preliminary issues that are of concern in a group or community, and on which to base further research or consultation. Focus groups should deliver detailed knowledge of the issues that concern a specific demographic or community.

Advantages

- Assists in developing a preliminary concept of the issues of concern, from which a wider community survey may be undertaken
- Helps to make limited generalizations based on the information generated by the focus group
- Identifies the reasons behind people's likes/dislikes
- Produces ideas that would not emerge from surveys/questionnaires, because the focus group provides opportunities for a wider range of comments
- Allows for more open discussion and transparency from groups that may have been discriminated in the past

Challenges to Consider

- Such small groups may not be representative of the community response to an issue, they require careful selection to be a representative sample (similar age range, status, etc)
- People must be able to operate within their comfort zones--some people may feel ill-at-ease about being open with their opinions in an unfamiliar group setting
- Requires skilled facilitation

Principles for Successful Planning

- Carefully select 8-15 individuals to discuss and give opinions on a single topic.
- Participants can be selected in two ways: random selection is used to ensure representation of all segments of society; non-random selection helps elicit a particular position or point of view
- Develop agenda with five or six major questions at most
- Provide background material as appropriate, or develop minimal presentation of material to set context and introduce the subject
- Book venue and arrange catering if meeting goes across a meal time
- Hire a facilitator
- Brief participants and the facilitator on the aims and objectives of the session

- Establish ground rules: keep focused, maintain momentum, and get closure on each question before moving on to the next
- Record data gathered from focus group discussion
- De-brief the session with the participants and the facilitator
- Compile a report of proceedings for the organizers, and offer a copy to the participants

Resources Needed:

<u>Staffing</u>

- Staff are needed to recruit participants, record and analyze the proceedings, and develop a report
- Experienced focus group facilitator is essential
- Interpreter, if necessary

<u>Materials</u>

- Neutral comfortable space for the sessions
- Means to record the information – possibly an audio recorder, video recorder, or flip charts

<u>Planning Time</u>

- Can be planned fairly quickly, although sufficient time is needed to select the participants, reserve space for the focus group sessions, and develop thoughtful and well-phrased questions.
- Ideally time should be set aside to pilot test the questions

<u>Implementation Time</u>

- A single focus group session typically last 2-4 hours.

Group Size

- Typically 8 – 15 participants per focus group session.

Cost

- Can be implemented without great expense.
- The most expensive feature is focus group facilitators.

Most relevant participation levels

- Involve, Collaborate

For More Information

<u>http://www.cse.lehigh.edu/~glennb/mm/FocusGroups.htm</u>

Form-based Tools

Description

Form-based tools are tools that require participants to complete a form – whether in hard-copy (paper) or on the web – to respond to specific questions, register general comments about particular issues, evaluate various options, or rank order preferences. Although there is a wide range of possible forms, we focus on two types: 1) those that generate qualitative responses, and 2) those that generate quantitative responses.

Qualitative Responses

Questionnaires use open-ended questions to encourage participants to respond in their own words. When summarized, they provide a measure of community opinion and/or issues at a certain time or in a certain area. Questionnaires ensure that exactly the same questions are presented to each person surveyed, and this helps with the reliability of the results. Questionnaires provide information on which to base decisions about planning and management of community and/or natural resources.

Advantages

- Encourages more honest answers based on the anonymity of the format
- Reaches respondents who are widely scattered or live considerable distances away
- Obtains information from those unlikely to attend meetings
- Allows the respondent to fill out response at a time convenient to them
- Provides larger samples for lower total costs than interviews and telephone surveys

Challenges to Consider

- Generally only useful for qualitative data
- Low response rates can bias the results
- Generally requires a postage-paid return envelope to encourage participation
- Requires a high degree of literacy among respondents
- Wording of questions needs to be unambiguous to avoid bias and should be pre-tested on a sample audience to ensure accuracy of responses

Principles for Successful Planning

- Draft clearly worded questions
- Keep questions as short as possible
- Pilot test the questions to make sure they are unbiased, straightforward and not open to misinterpretation
- Indicate the purpose of the questionnaire at outset
- Include qualitative data (e.g. age, sex, address, education, etc.) to allow for further extrapolation of the results
- Send out with printed information materials

- If the budget allows, provide stamped addressed envelope to improve responses
- Document responses as part of the public involvement process

Quantitative Responses

Surveys are designed to collect information from community groups in relation to a particular issue. They are used to gauge the level of public information or public opinion about an issue at a particular time. The results of the surveys provide information about the demographics and/or opinions of a specific group of people. This information can permit decision-making bodies to make better-informed decisions or to better inform the community in relation to an issue or proposal. Unlike Questionnaires, surveys typically ask close-ended questions and require respondents to choose from a limited range of responses (by marking tick boxes or scale-ranking items), making the survey results more amenable to statistical analysis.

Principles for Successful Planning

- Find out what is already known, and what relevant surveys are being done or planned elsewhere. This will avoid duplication, and will help establish what you need to find out from your survey
- Talk to locals with strong views and local knowledge to sharpen the focus of the questions
- Seek expert advice on the pitfalls and requirements of survey writing, but rely on your own understanding of the issue or topic
- Select your target audience. How will you sample them? Which stakeholders do you need to reach? How will you ensure that your survey gives a representation of the ideas of the group?
- Draft the survey/questionnaire
- Pilot test the survey to ensure the answers will give you the information you want (check readability and clarity of questions)
- Conduct the survey
- Collate and analyze the results. Develop a report and make it available to those surveyed and to appropriate

Resources Needed

Staffing

- Access to questionnaire design expertise
- Trial group for pilot-testing survey
- Staff to administer and analyze survey responses

Materials

- Paper and printer/photocopier to reproduce surveys
- Web-site for online posting of questionnaires or surveys
- Self-addressed stamped envelopes to encourage response
- Computers for statistical analyses

Planning Time

- Good surveys or comment forms can require substantial time to identify targeted stakeholders, develop sampling plan, determine the information sought and the best format and means for obtaining it

Implementation Time

- Can be implemented quickly; however, implementation time will depend in part on whether the information being collected is being driven by a specific decision milestone and what kind of data analysis will be necessary.
- Implementation time should allow at least 2 weeks for respondents to complete and return the form.

Group Size

- Unlimited

Cost:

- Depends on the number of persons target and the extent of analysis.

Most relevant participation levels

- Consult, Involve

Information Hotlines

Description

Information hotlines are generally used for larger and more controversial projects. They provide information in two ways: 1) via live telephone access to project team staff members who can answer questions or provide additional information and assistance; and 2) via a telephone call-in number that provides pre-recorded project information. Stakeholders can also leave comments and questions on the call-in number and receive a return call from staff in a reasonable timeframe. Consider SMS/Text if the community you are working in is more likely to use.

Advantages

- Delivers accurate, consistent information over the telephone to those who wish or need to know about an issue or event
- Offers an inexpensive and simple device for simple messages, information and public input
- Provides a good service to the public by preventing people from "doing the run around" to access project information
- Serves as a link between the citizens and government
- Provides simple updates and announcements on project activities
- Describes ways the community can become involved
- Offers a report-in mechanism for volunteers who act as extra observers in reporting on events
- Enhance sponsor agency accessibility
- Can be an avenue for citizens to feel more involved in their community
- Serves as a tip or information line to find out about issues in the community

Challenges to Consider

- Must be broadly advertised to be successful
- Can be time consuming, unless staffing is carefully organized
- Any live contacts must have sufficient knowledge of the project to be able to answer questions quickly and accurately
- May prevent staff from performing other tasks when on hotline duty
- Presents a significant commitment to respond in a timely manner to comments and questions received

Principles for Successful Planning

- Set up an easy-to-remember phone number
- Put the phone number on all project information
- Set limited times when callers know the line will be staffed
- Set a performance standard so callers know how long they will have to wait for a response
- Determine the information to be recorded and timetable of updates
- Make clear processes and responsibilities for keeping the line up to date
- Include information that will answer the most commonly asked questions
- Set up a toll-free number for non-local callers

- Offer the option of being put through to a specific person for more details
- Appoint staff to answer questions
- Brief and train staff to ensure they can access all information, have contact details of who to ask for information on specific aspects of the project, and have a pleasant telephone manner, even with difficult callers
- Record calls/common complaints/concerns in a telephone journal for your records and input to the participation process
- Calls can be forwarded to allow staff to be on-call without having to be tied to a specific location

Resources Needed

Staff
- Needed to set up and maintain recordings
- Needed to provide live support
- Multiple language support

Materials
- Dedicated phone number
- Comfortable workroom with desks, telephones, and computer access for recording contacts, tracking updated information, and contacting expert sources
- Polite, brief, up-to-date recorded message giving details of the project, proposal or issue, and inviting further enquiries

Planning Time
- Set up is relatively simple but requires commitment to long-term maintenance and staffing

Implementation Time
- Lines should be maintained throughout the life of the project

Group size
- Unlimited

Cost
- Relatively low cost unless staffed on a continual basis

Most relevant participation levels
- Can be used at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

Information Repository

Description
Information repositories are created to store project information in a centralized public location to provide easy access for community members. Typically, the information stored in a repository is for on-site perusal and review and not to be taken off-site. Popular places for information repositories include public libraries, schools, and other government buildings. The repository should contain all of the project information appropriate for public use. Create a repository online as well.

Advantages
- Provides an invaluable resource where members of the community can access information on a wide range of aspects of an issue, event or proposal, especially in poorer communities and where internet access is limited
- Helps limit the need for creating multiple copies of large and complex documents, especially where a large quantity of project information is being generated
- Can double as distribution centers for project information

Challenges to Consider
- May not well used by the public, especially if not in an easily accessible, well-publicized location with hours amenable to public schedules
- Staff at the repository must know the location of the materials, some sense of the content and organization of the material, and be able to answer basic project questions
- Useful documents can be removed and not replaced
- Diligence is required to keep the repository current
- Multiple languages

Principles for Successful Planning
- Select a suitable location that is central, accessible by public transportation and set up in a way that will allow the material to be easily used
- Publicize the existence of the repository through a range of publicity techniques
- Identify the materials suitable for location in a repository, and make sure that they are written and organized in a way that allows easy public access
- Use a “sign-in” system to track the level of interest in a project
- Reiterate the existence of the repository at public meetings and events
- Provide an overall organization, table of contents, and some way to search the available documents as well as the specific information within them
- Consider a frequently asked questions document to help orient people to the information housed, as well as public summaries of each document so that stakeholders can quickly search for topics that interest them
- Keep information up to date and maintain the repository for the duration of the project

- Use as the information repository as a distribution center for project handouts that members of the public can take away

Resources Needed

Staffing
- Staffing is generally provided by the organization managing the facility (such as librarians)
- Staff require basic library skills, interpersonal skills and the knowledge and ability to answer basic project questions
- Staffing is required to maintain repositories and keep information up to date

Materials
- Publicity
- Venue with good storage and display areas and room to access material (corrals or tables and chairs)

Planning Time
- Arranging for a location, producing copies of materials, and arranging materials in an accessible format

Implementation Time
- The repository should be available for the entire duration of the project

Cost
- Generally minimal.
- Major cost drivers are duplication and shipping.

Group size
- Unlimited

Most relevant participation levels
- Repositories are used at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

Kiosks

Description

Stand alone kiosks are electronic information stations capable of presenting a large amount of information using a computer and touch screen or mouse for navigation. Kiosks are similar to automatic teller machines, offering menus for interaction between a person and a computer. Information is provided through a presentation that invites viewers to ask questions or direct the flow of information. Software used in kiosks is highly specialized, storing information on hard drives, replaceable disks or through internet connections that allow retrieval of specific information based on directions from the user. Computer hardware requirements are fairly minimal, requiring relatively simple computer equipment. However, they must be made very rugged with easy to use interface components to provide for expected use.

Interactive video display kiosks aim to deliver information via a multimedia presentation. These media can appeal to all age groups and are suitable for those not able to read or those who prefer visual as well as verbal cues. The interactive elements, and the sense of a video-game to the presentation, will elicit responses from people who may not otherwise participate in a planning or decision-making process. Well set-up interactive video display kiosks provide a multimedia option for finding information about an event, issue or proposal, through a "click and find" process, rather than having to scroll through a great deal of information to find the desired information.

Kiosks are generally placed in high traffic areas such as shopping malls and libraries.

Advantages

- Can elicit preferences from people who may not otherwise participate
- Complements staff availability by being always available
- Can also serve as a distribution point for printed information
- Can also be used to collect input
- Can reach people who do not normally attend hearings or meetings
- Can allow the user to enter a special request to the sponsoring agency or join a mailing list
- Can be placed in a variety of locations and may be either stationary or mobile, and can also be brought to other types of meetings and events
- Can be developed similarly to web pages and navigated in a similar way, hence, a lot more information can be made available through kiosks than stand-alone displays.
- Can place in a strategic location to include marginalized communities

Challenges to Consider

- Sophisticated information programs and rugged requirements make interactive displays expensive
- Takes time to design, program, build and set up
- After construction and installation, staff commitments are relatively limited, but must be maintained to keep operational

- Any new technology involving machines may cause unease to portions of the public
- Potential vandalism is a factor in site selection
- Strategic siting of kiosks is imperative; they should be located in areas frequented by large numbers of people who are likely to be interested in spending time learning about community issues
- Consider whether the kiosk is worth the money--does it offer anything more or reach any additional stakeholders than can be achieved through your website?

Principles for Successful Planning:

- Conduct local meetings to determine whether interactive video would be a viable option for your community. The interactive video network might be used to serve a number of community projects and needs and build the community's capacity to participate in decision making in relation to issues of community concern
- Contact communications providers and government agencies for funding and sponsorship for the project (e.g. telecommunications companies may lay fiber optics as part of their community service obligations). Sponsorship is more likely if a number of agencies can present a case for using the systems
- In setting up displays on a community issue, present materials in ways that are simple, graphically interesting, and easily understood
- Develop material in similar ways to web pages, so they can be navigated similarly
- Seek limited public input through the inclusion of electronic surveys; however, manipulation is a possibility and results should be regarded with care
- Specialized software and industrial designers are required

Resources Needed

<u>Staff</u>

- Information technology professionals
- Specialized firms to build the kiosk
- Expert programmers to set up interactive display and keep it updated/troubleshoot and repair
- High speed internet connections
- Regular policing to prevent vandalism

<u>Materials</u>

- Sophisticated hardware and software
- Custom case

<u>Planning Time</u>

- Can take many months to design, program, build, and install

<u>Implementation Time</u>

- Should be maintained throughout the life of the project

Group size

- Unlimited

Cost

- Very high cost.

Most relevant participation levels

- Kiosks can be used at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

Press and Media

Description

Project information is presented to various media outlets for broad dissemination. In general, news or media releases are used to disseminate information. Media releases aim to get the widest possible coverage for a community issue or proposal through the publication or broadcasting of the information in the release. They may also attempt to elicit further enquiries by the media organization about the issue. In addition to producing media releases, building constructive relationships with key members of the media can be a very important component of getting the fair and frequent coverage that you desire.

Advantages

- Disseminate information quickly to a very large number of people
- Raises publicity and awareness
- Helps a sponsor or community group make contact with the media
- Alerts media outlets to an issue/event and may encourage their active participation through civic journalism

Challenges to Consider

- Your news not result in any reports if not deemed newsworthy or if more exciting news events take priority
- Your information be re-written by the news organization and key facts and emphasis changed
- Media organizations may become interested in an aspect of the project or issue that is not the intended focus or main issue of public concern
- Media organizations may seek out controversy and in so doing represent disagreements as more significant than they really are, and give minority voices in the community a larger voice than their overall role in the community warrants
- Media releases are competing with thousands of other incoming news items and have a better chance of being used if they are sent directly to a journalist who has had previous friendly contact with the sender
- The size of media releases limits the amount of detailed content that can be incorporated

Principles for Successful Planning

- Determine the main news angle you wish to communicate
- Write in a journalistic style to ensure maximum impact
- Check deadlines for local publications/television/radio bulletins to ensure the media release is received in time to be published before the event
- When announcing events, send releases with plenty of lead time
- Keep the focus appropriate to the media outlet, local for local papers, regional, national, etc.
- First paragraph of the release should be limited to 25 words or fewer telling briefly who, what, where, when and why about the event, issue, or project
- Use short sentences and paragraphs throughout

- Use active language/active voice
- Avoid jargon and difficult words (keep it simple)
- If using quotes in the body of the release, quote credible spokespeople and identify them with their positions
- Keep information clear and unambiguous
- Keep releases short, no longer than one page; if the media want more information, they will contact you
- Match the release to the required size and format of the outlet
- Include relevant dates, a contact name, and phone number for someone who is easily contacted during office hours
- If offering interviews, make it clear whether this is an exclusive for one media outlet (could be one print, one radio and one television, as these do not see one another as competing)
- Do not plan a general media conference unless you are sure that your project is relevant enough to get good attendance
- Track coverage to see how and when your information is published
- Be sure to write and thank the journalist to develop a relationship that may encourage her/him to work with you in tracking progress on the issue/project, and hence keep the community informed

Resources Needed

<u>Staff</u>
- Writers and editors
- Public affairs staff

<u>Materials</u>
- Fax machines and email

<u>Planning Time</u>
- Releases should be carefully prepared
- Be sure to consider all internal review times

<u>Implementation Time</u>
- Know the production deadlines for all news outlets and time your releases accordingly

Cost
- Very low cost.

Group size
- Unlimited

Most relevant participation levels
- Media releases are used at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

Printed Information

Description:

Printed material is still one of the easiest and most effective ways to provide information on a project or issue, or to publicize a participation process such as an event or meeting. Popular forms include: fact sheets, flyers, newsletters, brochures, post cards, issue papers, and summary reports. These can be single purpose or be produced as a series for distribution over time. Printed material can be distributed at meetings, made available for the public to pick up, or mailed out either directly to a select mailing list, distributed through third party community groups, or included as ‘bill stuffers’ with regular mail distribution such as utility bills or local newspapers.

Advantages

- Aims to provide concise summaries of issues through easily scanned words and graphics, to inform a community about an issue or proposal
- Printed information can be easily handed out and carried away
- Can be designed to allow for limited public input through comment forms
- Reaches a large amount of people through mailing or distribution at public outlets
- Facilitates the documentation of the public participation process
- Can be a relatively low-cost means of publicity

Challenges to Consider

- Printed materials need to be brief and there may be limited space to communicate complicated concepts
- There is no guarantee that the materials will be read
- If mailed, the guarantee of being read is only as good as the mailing list itself; mailing lists need regular updating to avoid wasted time, energy, and paper
- Appearance of the material should be visually interesting but should avoid a “sales” look
- Can be lost if sent by general mail or included with many other flyers and bill stuffers
- Requires a literate audience

Principles for Successful Planning:

- Plan your messages well
- Provide regular updates, but do not bombard people with information
- Consider strong graphics and branding materials so they are easy to identify and associate with your project
- Make all documents simple and easy to understand
- Try to keep most printed materials to a single sheet of paper
- Consider creative ways of organizing information
- Provide points of contact, such as the name of a central information contact or details of the participation program
- Do not overload materials with too much information

- Limited public input can be sought through printed public information materials by including surveys and questionnaires or comment/response sheets
- Include return postage for any response cards
- Consider postcards or self mailers instead of items that require an envelope. These will catch the reader's attention and are cheaper to mail
- The material should be easily available to the public and be accessible from a number of locations
- Include information about the public's role in the participation process and opportunities for participation in all communication
- Keep mailing lists up to date and check for duplication to save money, time and paper
- If distributing as a bill stuffer, speak to distributor of the bills and find out when they need the material in order to go out in the appropriate mail out, and in what format. Check what else is being distributed with bills, and decide whether your flyer will have a good chance of being read. Deliver/arrange for printer to deliver to agency/department who will stuff and distribute

Resources Needed

<u>Staff</u>

- Writers
- Editors
- Graphic designers
- Technical staff
- Mailing and distribution support

<u>Materials</u>

- Paper
- Printing
- Postage

<u>Planning Time</u>

- Set up is relatively simple but requires commitment to long-term maintenance and staffing.

<u>Implementation Time</u>

- Production and distribution of printed materials should be maintained throughout the life of the project

Group size

- Unlimited

Cost

- Can be extremely low cost if done electronically only
- Cost of printing and mailing hard copies is primary expense

Most relevant participation levels

- Printed information is important at all levels of participation

Public Meeting

Description

Public meetings bring diverse groups of stakeholders together for a specific purpose. Public meetings are held to engage a wide audience in information sharing and discussion. They can be used to increase awareness of an issue or proposal, and can be a starting point for, or an ongoing means of engaging, further public involvement. When done well, they help build a feeling of community.

Meetings can be virtually any size and can be used for any purpose from providing information up to consensus building. Public meetings are familiar, established ways for people to come together to express their opinions, hear a public speaker or proposed plan, engage in shared learning about a topic, or work together to develop solutions. Public meetings do not have to follow any specific script or agenda. They can be designed to meet the specific needs of the project, agency, and stakeholders. The main advantage of public meetings is the ability for stakeholders to listen to and talk to each other, not just the agency.

While most public meetings are larger and are intended to attract the full range of stakeholders in a community, smaller public meetings can also be held with like-minded stakeholders. Focus groups or dialogue meetings can be made up of people with common concerns who may not feel confident speaking up in a larger public gathering (e.g. women, those who speak English as a second language, indigenous groups). By creating a safe venue, these people can speak comfortably together, share common issues and a common purpose. The findings from smaller meetings can be presented at larger public meetings or in summary reports, giving a "voice" to those in the community who are unable to speak up in a larger setting.

Advantages

- Introduces a project or issue to a community
- Provides all participants a chance to voice their concerns, issues, and ideas
- Disseminates detailed information and decisions throughout the community
- Provides opportunities for exploring alternative strategies and building consensus
- Can create consensus for action on complex issues that require broad-based community input

Challenges to Consider

- Unless carefully planned and well facilitated, those perceived as having the most power within the community, or those who are most articulate and domineering in their verbal style can dominate the meeting and overwhelm the ability of other voices to be heard

- Even when well attended, meetings will only reach a very small segment of the community that require information and whose input could be extremely valuable in crafting solutions
- Participants may not come from a broad enough range of interests to represent the entire community, providing a skewed view of what the public really thinks
- Unless well designed and facilitated, conflicts may be deepened rather than explored and potentially resolved
- Community members may not be willing to work together

Principles for Successful Planning

- Establish why you need to hold a public meeting and design your meeting to meet these specific needs. Do not hold a meeting to simply meet a regulatory requirement; this wastes people's time, and may create disinterest for future involvement
- Consider a series of meetings, rather than a single event. If you try to do too much in a single meeting, you will achieve little as people will not be able to understand the full range of information you are trying to provide. Instead, consider the learning and deliberation journey required to solve the problem and identify strategic meeting points throughout the overall public participation process
- Publicize and advertise the meeting broadly. Make sure to put information in places where stakeholders go for their community information. Reach out directly to the range of interests who should be in attendance and extend personal invitations
- In all advertising, clearly state the goal of the meeting, how it will work, and why stakeholders should attend. State the beginning and end times but avoid providing information about smaller time segments
- Public meetings are often a focal point for media interest. Invite media and provide them with specific information that will help them to cover the meeting accurately
- Take photos to provide a record of the event
- Videos of the presentations can be produced to stream on the web and provide a resource to those who could not attend
- Produce a clear summary of the meeting and distribute widely
- Book a venue that allows for flexibility as to numbers of attendees
- Venue should be located directly in the affected community if possible, or in a neutral area if not
- Provide refreshments
- Conduct the meeting at a time that is most convenient for the community
- Make arrangements for people with disabilities or with language interpretation needs
- Arrive and set up early
- Test all equipment and arrange seating to maximize interaction of participants
- Greet everyone as they arrive and make them feel welcome
- Ask participants to agree to ground rules or behavioral guidelines at the beginning of the meeting

- Present the agenda and explain the purpose of the meeting, how it will work, expected outcomes, and how/where it fits into the overall public participation process
- Facilitation is essential
- Make sure to create a safe and secure environment for all voices to be heard and to avoid allowing the meeting to be taken over by vocal community members
- Be flexible; issues may arise that can change the agenda or ability to address certain issues
- Record all input and comments; summarize what you have heard at the end of the meeting and let participants know what you will do with their input and what to expect next in the process, especially opportunities for ongoing participation

Resources Needed

<u>Staffing</u>

- Registration desk
- All staff should be up front to greet attendees and build or manage relationships
- Lead facilitators and breakout group facilitators
- Handlers for cordless microphones
- Recorders for flip charts or graphic recorders
- Note-takers
- A/V assistance, videographers
- Technical staff to give presentations
- Set up and break down of furniture and equipment

<u>Materials</u>

- Venue reservation with appropriate space and furniture
- Registration desk, forms, nametags
- Refreshments appropriate to time, effort and audience
- Data projectors, laptops, screens
- Flipcharts, tape, and markers
- Sound system with cordless microphones
- Presentations, posters, fact sheets, agendas
- Video
- Props for working in groups (pens, paper, pins, etc.)
- Evaluation forms, comment forms
- Child care

<u>Planning Time</u>

- Effective meetings take months to plan and implement
- Begin advertising at least one month in advance

<u>Implementation Time</u>

- Meetings generally last from one to four hours
- Arrive at least two hours ahead to ensure all set up is complete prior to early arrivals

Group size

- Meetings can be designed to meet virtually any size audience
- For larger meetings, consider some portion of the meeting which allows for smaller group dialogue

Cost

- Simple public meetings can be done with minimal cost
- The major cost driver is staff time
- Additional significant costs can include venue rental, advertising, and neutral facilitation support

Most relevant participation levels

- Meetings can be held at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

For More Information

http://ohioline.osu.edu/cd-fact/1555.html

Stakeholder Interviews

Description

Interviews with stakeholders are one-to-one conversations about a specific topic or issue. The primary purpose of these interviews is to obtain project-relevant information and elicit stakeholder reactions and suggestions. Stakeholders are likely to have knowledge, wisdom, and insight that can help an agency in its decision process. Stakeholder interviews provide a broad overview of the interviewees' opinions about a specific topic that may reveal hidden concerns or ideas that would not be expressed in response to a set number of specific questions.

Advantages

- Helps identify issues, concerns, and desired agendas
- Helps target potential participants
- Elicits ideas for designing a public participation process
- Provides a good way to introduce agency staff to the community
- Enhances an agency's credibility because it demonstrates agency interest in the community and in understanding the community's concerns
- Can help defuse potentially confrontational situations
- Useful for targeting key stakeholders who have specific knowledge about an issue
- Provides opportunities to obtain an understanding of concerns and issues of key stakeholders
- Can be used to determine how best to communicate with the public
- Can be used to determine the best members of consultative committees

Challenges to Consider

- Can be expensive
- Can be time consuming
- Interviewers must engender trust or risk negative responses to the interview format or undermining the credibility of the public participation process
- Requires skilled interviewers

Principles for Successful Planning

- Select interviewees according to designated criteria (areas of expertise, representation of groups, geographic location)
- Arrange times and places for interviewing; better quality information will be forthcoming if the interviewee is in a familiar setting, so it may be easier for the interviewer to go to them
- Considering providing information to the interviewees prior to the interview (e.g., the general topics that you'll be talking about with them)
- Ensure uninterrupted time for at least one hour
- Check all equipment and take spare tapes, batteries, pens, etc. to avoid any interruptions during the interview

- Try to transcribe interview notes as soon as possible after the interview, while nuances, body language and asides are still in the interviewer's memory
- Prepare a report, including the verbatim interviews, and offer copies to the interviewees

Resources Needed

Staffing
- Trained interviewers

Materials
- Note-taking equipment (tape-recorder, notebook, computer).

Planning Time
- Time needed to identify stakeholders to be interviewed, develop interview guide, and train interviewers

Implementation Time
- Competently conducting interviews requires time and concentration. A single person can conduct up to four one-hour interviews per day, but that does not include the time required to transcribe interview notes and analyze the findings

Group Size
- The only limit to the number of persons who can be interviewed is the number of stakeholders

Cost
- Will range depending on the number of interviewees and interviewers

Most relevant participation levels
- Involve, Consult, Collaborate

Study Circles

Description

Study Circles are voluntary groups of 8-15 people who meet three to six times to explore a subject or issue. A Study Circle process often involves numerous individual Study Circle groups meeting during the same time period to discuss issues of common concern. Each Study Circle group meeting commonly lasts 2-3 hours and is directed by a moderator whose role is to aid a lively but focused dialogue. Between meetings, participants read materials they were given at the end of the last meeting. These materials are usually compiled by the sponsor or organizer of the particular study circle and used as springboards for dialogue. By encouraging people to formulate their own ideas about issues and to share them with others, Study Circles help overcome people's lack of information and feelings of inadequacy in the face of complex problems. At the end of a Study Circle process, participants from all the individual Study Circles may come together in a large meeting to work on the action items from different circles.

Advantages

- Engages many people on an issue without having them meet at the same place and time
- Allows citizens to gain ownership of the issues and gain a deeper understanding of their own and others' perspectives and concerns
- Fosters new connections among community members that lead to new levels of community action
- Can create new connections between citizens and government
- Uncovers areas of agreement and common concern among a diverse group of people

Challenges to Consider

- Can be difficult to recruit participation from hard to reach parts of the community
- Requires coalition building to form an organizing committee that reflects the community at large. This takes time and effort, leadership, a working knowledge of community dynamics, and a willingness to learn by trial and error

Principles for Successful Planning

- Identify an issue of broad community concern. Some of the issues communities have focused on include understanding environmental impact statements or exploring the issues involving proposed developments
- Develop a Study Circle plan that includes the goal of the Study Circle process, geographic scope, how to achieve diversity in the circles, and how the sponsor agency will use the information and ideas that come from the circles
- Organize easy to use, non-partisan discussion materials

- Recruit participants using a variety of methods suitable for the populations you are trying to reach.
- Conduct the study circles. Each Study Circle sets its own ground rules for respectful dialogue, and the process is guided by an impartial facilitator. An important principle for each Study Circle is to let people start "where they are." It must be clear from the outset that participants are invited to share their personal stories and experiences early on in the discussion so that the ensuing dialogue will naturally welcome people of all backgrounds and points of view. The process progresses from a session on personal experience of the issue to sessions that examine many points of view on the issue, to a session that considers strategies for action and change
- Study Circle facilitators summarize the results and bring them to the sponsor agency, which identifies themes across the circles. These themes form the basis of recommendations

Resources Needed

<u>Staffing</u>

- Need a person or entity to organize and orchestrate the overall process.
- Facilitators (paid or volunteer) are needed for each Study Circle.

<u>Materials</u>

- Discussion materials
- Gathering space for each Study Circle group
- Flipcharts, tape, and markers
- Refreshments

<u>Planning Time</u>

- Time is needed to form a representative organizing committee.
- Additional time is needed to recruit participation, identify discussion topics, and develop discussion materials

Implementation Time

- Individual Study Circle sessions last 2- 3 hours
- Study Circles processes can take place over several months, depending on the number of participants and geographic scope of the process

Cost

- Can be used to engage large numbers of citizens for little expense.

Number of Participants

- Unlimited

Most relevant participation levels

- Involve, Collaborate, Empower

For More Information

<u>http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-studycircles.html</u>

Websites

Description

World wide websites provide interested stakeholders with project information, announcements, documents, and opportunities for input or discussion. Web sites allow for the use of a wide variety of media formats, including video. Websites allow stakeholders to share and obtain information quickly, effectively, and at low cost. Websites provide the chance to inform a wide range of people about issues and to invite the website visitors to become involved in a variety of ways.

Websites are rapidly replacing many other forms of project information including information repositories and all types of printed and mailed materials. Websites are more powerful and more flexible than all other forms of public information. However, not all stakeholders have access to the internet and this must be taken into account in its use and application.

Advantages

- Provide complete public information about the project
- Serves as a complete and searchable information repository
- Used to obtain public input via surveys, questionnaires, or in on-line discussions
- Reaches large numbers of people with enormous amounts of information
- Offers a low cost way of distributing all types of documents and media
- Offers a highly accessible forum for advertising upcoming events and posting project updates
- Can be used to provide streaming video of events and activities and enable participation of stakeholders in remote locations and those unable to attend meetings or events

Challenges to Consider

- Many people still do not have access to the web
- Many people are still not web-literate or have slow access or older computer systems and will not be able to access all available content
- Its success as a participatory tool is still relatively unknown and cannot completely replace face-to-face interaction
- The anonymous nature of many internet users presents challenges for honest and open interaction among stakeholders
- Information overload and poor design can prevent people from finding what they need

Principles for Successful Planning:

- Unless you have the skill and experience, do not create your own project website; find someone with appropriate web design skills
- Design the “architecture” thoughtfully - all the levels of information, links and illustrations available and necessary to inform and engage the user

- Conduct background research by exploring the web in your chosen area or field. Discover what works well on other websites, what they cover, what they omit, and use this information to improve your own website
- Conduct extensive trials of the website before releasing it to the public. People are unlikely to return to your website if they find it difficult to navigate or the information irrelevant. Ensure all links are working, that information is easily found, and that the overall experience works smoothly
- Launch the website with suitable coverage in the media, in newsletters, and in a public forum
- Ensure that you have alternative communication options for those who are not web-literate or do not have access to the internet
- Consider a web address (url) that is simple and memorable
- Place the website address on all correspondence and other printed material from the organization

Resources Needed

Staff
- Websites require knowledgeable and readily available staff to ensure it is designed well and kept working and up to date

Materials
- Internet server capable of handling expected traffic

Planning Time
- Designing and populating a large project website can take several months

Implementation Time
- The web site must be maintained throughout the life of the project
- Consider creating an archive site once the project is complete to allow future stakeholders to understand how the decision was made

Cost
- Design and creation of a good web site can be expensive
- Maintenance costs are minimal but ongoing

Group size
- Unlimited

Most relevant participation levels
- Websites are used at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum.

For More Information
http://www.makingthenetwork.org

World Cafe

Description

A World Café is a meeting process that involves a series of simultaneous conversations around a particular issue or topic. A World Café typically lasts 2-3 hours and consists of numerous table conversations involving 3-5 persons per table. Each table has a "host" who stays at the table during the entire event and keeps the table discussion on task. During the course of a World Café, participants change tables numerous times and discuss the same general topic with a variety of other participants, delving more deeply into the topic during each subsequent conversation. This enables ideas to flow around the room and participants to connect with a larger group of individuals and hear new perspectives. World Café questions are designed to begin at a general level and move toward more specific questions with each group rotation. Through this process, participants are able to identify common themes or common ground in response to each question.

Advantages

- Fosters open discussion of an important or meaningful topic
- Allows for obtaining a high quantity of responses from a range of perspectives on specific topics in a short period of time
- Builds community among diverse participants
- Draws participants into information-sharing and problem-solving by virtue of its informal atmosphere and small group dynamics

Challenges to Consider

- Although professional facilitators are not required, table hosts need to have skills to keep groups on task on manage strong emotions
- Not appropriate for obtaining formal comment on proposed plans

Principles for Successful Planning

- Keep in mind the seven principles of World Cafes:
  - Set the context
  - Create hospitable space
  - Explore questions that matter
  - Encourage everyone's contribution
  - Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives
  - Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions
  - Harvest and share collective discoveries
- Prepare compelling question(s) for discussion and prepare copies for each table
- Prepare written instructions for the table hosts about what is to be accomplished at each table during each round of the discussion
- Set up tables with tablecloths and other items to convey a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere

- Put paper on each table to encourage doodling and provide pens, markers, and sticky notes for participants to take notes or record their thoughts
- Situate tables around the room
- Designate a table host for each table and make sure each understands the table host role and instructions
- Welcome the participants and have them take a seat at any table
- Table host welcomes the participants, provides instructions, and facilitates the table conversation
- At designated intervals, participants move to another table
- Instruct participants not to visit any table more than once and are encouraged to mingle with new people during each round
- Participants return to their original tables after a series of conversations and share what they have heard and learned
- At the conclusion, each table can share a common theme with the group at large

Resources Needed

Staffing
- Person or team to develop discussion questions
- One person to facilitate the overall event
- Number of staff ultimately depends on the number of participants

Materials
- Adequate number of small tables that can accommodate up to five persons
- Table decorations (to set a comfortable and inviting environment)
- Paper, pens, markers for participants to record notes, ideas
- Refreshments
- Materials for recording table summaries (flip charts, butcher paper)
- Room large enough to accommodate needed number of tables for expected number of participants.

Planning Time
- World Cafes can be planned over the course of a few weeks. The most time consuming aspect of planning involve securing meeting space, inviting participants, training table hosts, and scripting the sequence of discussion questions.

Implementation Time
- A World Cafě typically lasts 2-3 hours

Cost
- Most significant costs involve facility rental (if necessary) and the cost of an overall event facilitator

Group size
- Depends on the size of the room.

- The most important factor is to keep each table conversation to no more than four participants plus the table host

Most relevant participation level

- Involve, Collaborate

For More Information

www.theworldcafe.com

Social Media

Description

Social Media outreach can provide interested stakeholders with project information, announcements, documents, and opportunities for input or discussion. Social media, such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook, allows for the use of a wide variety of media formats, including video. Social media allow stakeholders to share and obtain information quickly, effectively, and at low cost. Social media platforms provide the chance to inform a wide range of people about issues and to invite users to become involved in a variety of ways.

Social media platforms provide opportunity for greater involvement of stakeholders and should be used to compliment other outreach activities. Not all stakeholders have access to the internet and this must be taken into account in its use and application.

Advantages

- Provide public information about the project
- Serves as a real time outreach tool
- Used to obtain public input via tweets, messages, Facebook posts
- Reaches large numbers of people with enormous amounts of information
- Offers a low cost way of distributing all types of documents and media
- Offers a highly accessible forum for advertising upcoming events and posting project updates
- Can be used to provide streaming video of events and activities and enable participation of stakeholders in remote locations and those unable to attend meetings or events

Challenges to Consider

- Many people still do not have access to the web
- Many people are still not social media-literate or have slow access or will not be able to access all available content
- Its success as a participatory tool is important, but cannot completely replace face-to-face interaction
- The anonymous nature of many social media users presents challenges for honest and open interaction among stakeholders
- Information overload and poor design can prevent people from finding what they need

Principles for Successful Planning:

- Design all social media posts thoughtfully - all the levels of information, links and illustrations available are necessary to inform and engage the user
- Design your social media program knowing that it will be shared with other stakeholders
- Ensure that you have alternative communication options for those who are not social media-literate or do not have access to the internet

- Consider usernames and hashtags (#) that will give stakeholders information about the project
- Place the social media platform addresses on all correspondence and other printed material from the organization

Resources Needed

Staff
- Social media requires knowledgeable and readily available staff to ensure it is designed well and kept working and up-to-date

Materials
- Internet server capable of handling expected traffic
- Smart phones to use social media in "real time"

Planning Time
- Designing social media outreach should be strategic and should be tracked to make sure your outreach is working

Implementation Time
- Social media should be maintained throughout the life of the project

Cost
- Design and creation of a good social media program requires trained staff
- Invest in training

Group size
- Unlimited

Most relevant participation levels
- Social Media can be used at all levels on the IAP2 spectrum

For online tutorials on how to use social media platforms go to:

1) Youtube.com
2) Search the platform of your interest, i.e. Twitter tutorial
3) Watch tutorial

www.youtube.com
www.twitter.com
www.snapchat.com
www.facebook.com
www.instagram.com

Public Participation Foundational Skills, Knowledge, and Behaviors

The individual skills and behaviors of the project team are paramount to a successful public participation program. There is no one magic skill that will help you to always succeed. However, the right attitudes and behaviors are always necessary for success and will go a long way in building the trust and credibility necessary for successful public participation.

The skills, knowledge, and behaviors outlined in this section are all essential for success. All can be learned, but all require practice, experience, and diligence to ensure their effective use. Few public participation projects can achieve success without all of these actions taking place.

Fundamental Understanding of Public Participation Principles

All of the information presented on this website is designed around fundamental principles of meaningful participation that are essential for the trust-building and credibility that lead to project success. They are:

- Clear, defined opportunity for the public to influence the decision
- Management commitment to fully consider public input in decision making
- Engagement of the full range of stakeholders from the community, including vulnerable populations and marginalized communities
- Focus on building relationships between and among stakeholders
- Creating and sharing truthful, comprehensive, and clear information

(For resources on Public Participation Ethics, Values, and Principles click here)

Fundamental Understanding of Public Participation Behaviors

Ultimately, it is how agency staff behave that determines the success or failure of public participation and convinces others to participate in a meaningful way. Behavior of the sponsoring agency will set the tone for the entire process. These behaviors cannot be faked; they must represent the sincere intent of the agency to build and implement effective public participation programs. Important behaviors for public participation include the following:

- **Transparency** to open up the process and allow all of the parties to understand how decisions are being made and the information that is being considered, and to approach problems as colleagues in order to understand the issues and solve the problems
- **Openness** to different stakeholders, ideas, input, and ways of working with people, regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or income
- **Humility** in order to suspend judgment and assumptions, value the contributions of others, and take the attitude of a learner
- **Respect** for individuals, for their experience, points of view, emotions, and needs, and provide validation of each individual’s experience and values
- **Honesty** to always provide truthful and timely information
- **Reliability** to put forth the effort it takes to make a participatory process work and to do what you promise

- **Flexibility** to recognize that you cannot predict all contingencies in advance and will have to adjust the process as you proceed
- **Resiliency** to move the process forward even through difficult and controversial circumstances.

Project Management
Planning and management are essential to public participation. The project management skills in which agency staff will need to gain proficiency include:

- **Situation Assessment**. The ability to engage in stakeholder interviews to assess internal and external needs, constraints, and conditions for effective planning.
- **Goal-setting**. The ability to define clear, understandable goals and objectives for the role of the public in the decision process. The ability to describe individual roles and responsibilities for all team members in regard to public participation.
- **Planning**. The ability to synthesize the results of the situation assessment into understandable and actionable components. The ability to define the overall decision process and identify and integrate the appropriate public participation activities to achieve the goals and objectives.
- **Process Management**. The ability to keep all activities moving forward, organize activities for success, keep track of goals and objectives over time, and integrate different team members' activities.
- **Meeting and Event Management**. The ability to plan all logistical elements of meetings including facility selection and booking, publicity, setup, audio visual support, organizing all activities and roles, registration, and collecting input.
- **Evaluation**. The ability to design evaluation metrics to gauge the success of the public participation process and events. The ability to collect, assess, and act on the data from evaluation to improve project performance. (For resources on evaluation click here.)

Stakeholder Communications
Effective communication is the foundation of any public participation program. The ability to create and distribute effective information, develop meaningful relationships, and listen to public input is essential. The basic communication skills required for any successful public participation project include:

- **Effective writing**. The ability to create clear and concise written messages in plain language.
- **Translating complex information into understandable formats**. The ability to combine words and graphics to make difficult and complex issues understandable to a lay audience.
- **Presenting information in public settings**. The ability to present information to large audiences in a comfortable and understandable way. The ability to create effective visual information that assists the audience's understanding.
- **Interpersonal skills**. The ability to relate to people in face-to-face situations, to make them feel comfortable and secure, and to exhibit key public participation behaviors at all times.

- **Active listening**. The ability to focus on the speaker and portray the behaviors that provide them with the time and safety needed to be heard and understood.

Neutral Facilitation
For many projects, a neutral facilitator can help make the overall process work as well as facilitate specific meetings and events. Facilitation includes the full range of management and support required to help a group to accomplish its goals.

There is a wide range of perspectives about the ideal nature and values of facilitation, much as there is a wide range of perspectives about the ideal nature and values of leadership. Someone who has strong knowledge and skills regarding group dynamics and processes is often most appropriate to serve as a facilitator. An effective facilitator might also require strong knowledge and skills regarding the particular topic or content that the group is addressing in order to reach its goals.

Facilitation fills an important impartial role to ensure all voices are heard and understood, and that the discussion stays on topic to the specific project. Key facilitation activities include:

- Suggest procedures, processes, and structures that promote inclusion and participation
- Prepare and implement a process workplan
- Get to know all participants' values, interests, and concerns
- Identify if certain stakeholders are more vulnerable to the outcome of the decision
- Get to know the issues inside and out
- Advocate for all of the skills, behaviors, and goals of the process and/or meeting
- Act as learning and dialogue guides
- Ensure logistical arrangements that meet the needs of the participants
- Ensure all voices are included and heard, including marginalized communities
- Help participants understand the importance of process
- Design structured thinking activities
- Teach people how to participate
- Identify and clarify conflicts
- Mediate small conflicts
- Identify common ground as it emerges
- Enforce agreed-upon procedures and processes
- Suggest, get commitment to, and enforce ground rules

Public Participation Foundational Skills Capacity Matrix

Not all members of the public participation team are required to have all the skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed for successful public participation. The key is to assess overall capacity of the team and ensure that the team as a whole has sufficient expertise, knowledge, and experience.

Foundational Skills	**Skill Level Needed for all Team Members**	**Additional Skill Level Needed for Managers and Leaders**	**Additional Skills That May be Sought from Outside Experts**
Fundamental Understanding of Public Participation Principles • Opportunity for influence • Commitment to input • Inclusiveness • Relationship-building • Transparency	Understand and recognize the importance of all principles	Provide leadership and guidance to ensure that principles are at the core of the planning and implementation of the project.	Provide training in principles and overall approach to public participation.
Fundamental Understanding of Public Participation Behaviors Openness • Humility • Respect • Honesty • Reliability • Flexibility • Resilience	Reflect on the importance of individual behaviors and how to ensure their interactions with stakeholders are positive	Recognize individual behaviors and overall team behavior and build the capacity over time. Ensure team member roles are properly aligned with their current behavior capacity. Model the behaviors at all times.	Provide training in behaviors.
Project Management • Situation Assessment • Goal-setting • Planning • Process Management • Meeting and Event Management	Apply appropriate management skills to individual role	Design public meetings and events. Create project workplans. Provide overall project management and leadership.	Provide training in project management. Design public meetings and events. Create project workplans.

• Evaluation			
Stakeholder Communications • Effective writing • Simple language • Presentations • Interpersonal skills • Active listening	Understand the importance of each skill, current skill level, and take action to improve skills over time.	Recognize individual skills and overall team capacity and build the capacity over time. Ensure that team member roles are properly aligned with their current skills. Engage outside experts to complement gaps in currents skills.	Provide training in communication. Provide expert communication skills and assistance in all areas.
Neutral Facilitation	Recognize the role and importance of facilitation	Work cooperatively with the facilitator to design and implement credible processes	Apply all the skills required of an expert neutral facilitator

(For resources on public participation skills and behaviors, click here)

Glossary of Public Participation Terms

Active listening: A form of listening designed to elicit as much information as possible from the speaker so as to understand the content of what is being said, the speaker's emotions, and make the speaker feel that she or he has been heard. Active listening involves the use of non-verbal behavior to demonstrate interest in what the speaker is saying, open-ended questions to elicit information from the speaker, and paraphrasing or summarizing to confirm understanding.

Capacity building: In the context of public participation, capacity building is a process in which a sponsor agency or facilitator improves the ability of stakeholders and communities to engage with one another to participate in a decision process.

Collaboration: A process in which parties agree to work together to resolve commonly understood problems in a cooperative manner

Common ground: A collection of opinions, interests, or values that persons or groups of people share with one another, even though they may not agree about other things. Finding common ground is a technique for facilitating dialogue and can be a basis for parties to reach mutual understanding or agreement.

Conflict management: The ability to recognize and manage conflict dynamics to enable disputing parties to work together in a decision process. Conflict management typically involves advance work with disputants to determine the issues to be discussed, the use of ground rules or group norms to guide behavior, and the use of a facilitator to manage discussions.

Consensus: An outcome from group decision-making in which the group develops an agreement that is good enough (though not necessarily perfect) so that all of the people at the table are willing to support it.

Consensus-building: A process in which people agree to work together to resolve common problems in a relatively informal, cooperative manner. It is a technique that can be used to bring together representatives from different stakeholder groups early in a decision-making process. A facilitator helps participants design and implement their own strategy for developing group solutions to the problems.

Cultural skills: A collection of skills that allow a person to communicate and interact effectively with people with different opinions, interests, or values. These skills are used by sponsor agencies or facilitators during public participation processes to provide information and build effective relationships with key stakeholders.

Dialogue: A structured conversation, or series of conversations, intended to create, deepen, and build human relationships and understanding. The goal of dialogue is often simply to improve interpersonal understanding and trust.

Environmental justice: Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Facilitation: A process used to help a group of people or parties have constructive discussions about complex, or potentially controversial issues. The facilitator provides assistance by helping the parties set ground rules for these discussions, promoting effective communication, eliciting creative options, and keeping the group focused and on track.

Frames: Ways of defining a problem. Some people may define a problem in terms of rights, while others may define it in terms of interests or relative power. These different positions are sometimes referred to as different "frames."

Goal statement: In the context of public participation, a goal statement is the well-defined purpose of a plan that is real, practical and shared. A goal is established while mapping out a decision process so that all stakeholders fully understand the decision process being used.

In-person tools: Techniques that a sponsor agency can use to obtain input or inform the public in a face- to face setting. These include workshops, focus groups, citizen advisory committees, and key-pad voting.

Interests: The needs, hopes, fears, or motivations that usually underlie a person's or group's stated goal or preferred outcome (known as their position). When stakeholders in a public participation process to focus on their interests instead of their positions it increases the possibility that the decision will satisfy multiple interests of diverse stakeholders.

Public Participation Spectrum: The International Association for Public Participation Spectrum consists of five levels of public participation, from simply informing the public about the decision to be made to placing final decision power in the public's hands. Each level involves a explicit goal. The five levels and associated goals of the Spectrum are:

- *Inform* - to provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives opportunities and/or solutions.
- *Consult* - to obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/ or decisions.
- *Involve* - to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
- *Collaborate* - to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- *Empower* - to place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Public participation: A process that consists of a series of activities and actions conducted by a sponsoring agency or other entity to both inform the public and obtain input from them. Public participation affords stakeholders the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives. Other terms for public participation include public involvement and public engagement.

Public participation behaviors: Behaviors that embody the principles of authentic public participation and set the tone for the public participation process. These include:

- *Transparency* - the act of promoting accountability and providing information for citizens about what the Government is doing.
- *Openness* - the act of including multiple interests and stakeholders in the decision making process.
- *Humility* - the act of doing something in the interest of another person or group of people.
- *Respect* - the act of honoring somebody or something by showing positive feelings through language or gestures.
- *Honesty* - the act of doing something that is considered fair and truthful.
- *Reliability* - the act of doing something that is expected or has been promised.
- *Flexibility* - the act of changing according to circumstances or changing because of persuasion or considering multiple options.
- *Resiliency* - the act of recovering quickly from setbacks.

Remote tools: Techniques that an agency can use to obtain input or inform the public in a non face-to- face setting. These include comment sheets, surveys, and web-sites.

Situation assessment: The process of gathering information to determine the public participation program and techniques that are feasible and most appropriate for the circumstances. The main purpose of a situation assessment is to identify the conditions necessary for a successful public participation process so that the sponsor agency and stakeholders are engaged in a common purpose.

Social inclusion: The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society. Social inclusion aims to empower poor and marginalized people to take advantage of burgeoning global opportunities. It ensures that people have a voice in decisions which affect their lives and that they enjoy equal access to markets, services and political, social and physical spaces.

Sponsor agency: The organization responsible for informing the public about and obtaining public input to influence a decision process. This includes the decision-makers within the organization and anybody else in the organization that could affect the decision or the public participation process.

Stakeholders: The people or communities who are affected by an agency's work, who have influence or power over it, or have an interest in its successful or unsuccessful conclusion. This includes people and communities with the power to either to block or advance an agency's work, as well as communities that might be disproportionally burdened by the project.

Vulnerable populations: The economically disadvantaged, racial and ethnic minorities, the uninsured, low-income children, the elderly, the homeless, those with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and those with other chronic health conditions, including severe mental illness.