

State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources

**Public Participation
Handbook**
8510.5

Public Participation Handbook

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION BASICS

What is public participation?

Public participation is any process that involves the public in problem solving, planning, policy setting, or decision making and uses public input to make decisions. It is a process through which people who will be affected by or interested in a decision – those with a stake in the outcome – get a chance to influence its content before it is made. Through public participation, stakeholders influence and share responsibility for decisions.*

*Definition adapted from those of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), the Canadian Standards Association, and the World Bank.

Public participation includes a range of levels of public impact on a project or decisions. Different levels of participation reflect different objectives and carry different promises to the public. Different public participation approaches and tools contribute to the varying levels of impact. Figure 10-1 illustrates this concept.

Figure 10-1



Public participation uses tools and techniques that are common to a number of fields: communications, social science research, dispute resolution, facilitation, and more. In many ways, these fields are kindred spirits with similar goals of increasing clarity and openness, giving voice, making better decisions, and managing conflicting needs and values. This is reflected in Figure 10-2.

Figure 10-2



Why involve the public?

Believe it or not, it can make your job easier... as well as being the right thing to do, ethically. Involving the public has several benefits, both practical and ideological.

1. **Democratic principles.** Our culture and society embraces the philosophy that people have the right to influence what affects them. Our government is of, by, and for the people. We manage their resources and environment. Involving them and seriously considering their input and needs is ethically the right thing to do. Public participation provides a method for incorporating the public's values and needs into decisions, resulting in more responsive and democratic governance.
2. **Improved process.** Public participation results in better decision making. It can make the decision-making process easier not harder. Although the front-end planning can be lengthier and more complicated, subsequent steps are often more efficient and some sources of delays can be avoided.

Without good public participation, your process will more likely become entangled in legal and political quagmires – lawsuits about lack of due process, legislative interventions, and other such strategies are signs that individuals or organizations were unsatisfied with the decision-making process.

The 1992 Madison pool fiasco illustrates how lack of good involvement during planning can lead to delays and difficulties. The Madison Parks Commission had been studying developing several pools across the city. The first of these was to be a pool at one of the city parks along one of the lakes. They did not adequately involve the community in deciding whether to have a pool and the location for the pool.

Although most Madison residents seemed to want a public pool, many were upset with the chosen location, which would have resulted in the loss of woods along a lakeshore and would have required kids to cross a busy thoroughfare. Grass roots opposition led the way to a referendum. The referendum, which passed easily, requires the city to hold referendums on any construction projects that cost more than \$500,000 and are near waterfront parks.

This referendum not only killed this pool proposal, but the others that were being studied. \$800,000 in private donations had to be returned. Some estimated the newly-passed referendum would force 6 and 12 month delays on other projects, including a golf course expansion already proposed at the time of the referendum. Others feared it would greatly delay or prevent a city convention center.

Good public participation improves your decision making by:

- **Providing an early warning system.** Participation by the public early on and throughout the planning or decision-making process provides early warning that you might be heading in a direction that is untenable. It can also provide early notice that you were unaware of certain issues, options, or opportunities. Generally, the sooner such information comes to light, the more useful it will be to you in your process and the less likely you will need to undo earlier work and decisions.
 - **Managing single-issue viewpoints.** Because public participation illuminates many issues and many viewpoints, it can help manage single-issue viewpoints. When people partake in an interactive process with others who have a broad range of perspectives and values, they generally become more aware and appreciative of the challenge of balancing needs and making decisions in complex situations. While their zeal for their issue will not diminish, they may allow space for consideration of other issues and needs.
 - **Creating better understanding of the task.** For an effective decision-making process, both the decision makers and the public need to fully understand the problem, situation, or opportunity and the available options. Public participation helps the decision-making process because it clarifies the definition of problem, it provides a forum for idea and concern sharing, it requires clear and accurate information, and it brings people together to focus on the issue.
 - **Building a motivated force.** When people help us solve problems, make decisions, or create plans, typically they develop ownership and a stronger stake in those initiatives. Frequently, they will then become stronger advocates and help bring them to life. This may take the form of political advocacy, volunteerism, partnering, publicity, securing funding, and so on.
 - **Getting it right the first time.** If people have had their issues addressed and considered throughout the process, the decisions should better meet their needs. Similarly, if the decision-making process, through public participation, has met their procedural needs, they should be more supportive of the decision. This diminishes the capacity of someone to stop a decision either late in the decision-making process or even in the implementation phase. For example, many lawsuits to stop or delay a project are aimed less at the actual decision and more at failures in the decision-making process – options weren't considered, meetings weren't public and noticed, analysis was flawed.
3. **Better results and decisions.** Not surprisingly, the process improvements discussed above result in better decisions.
- **More information.** A public involvement process brings more information into a decision. It adds useful information to a decision beyond the scientific knowledge our agency provides. Local knowledge can provide important perspectives, information and history. Social, economic, and institutional components can be added to the ecological framework.

For example: In a highway-planning project, it is cheaper to learn right away that a proposed highway will separate an Orthodox Jewish community from their temple – a problem since they do not drive on the Sabbath.

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That way, an underpass becomes an early feature of the highway plan, as opposed to correcting the highway after it is built or forcing upheaval in a community.

- **More perspectives.** The participation by a range of interested people adds more perspectives and expands options, thus enhancing the decision. You can create a decision that meets more people's needs and considers more people's concerns if they have been involved in its formation.
 - **Increased mutual understanding.** Public participation provides a forum for both decision makers and stakeholders to better understand the range of issues and viewpoints. Thus it broadens their own knowledge base as they contribute to the decision.
 - **Free consultants.** In one sense, people you involve serve as free consultants to your project. They may bring technical expertise, first hand knowledge of an initiative, specific knowledge about how decisions will impact certain population segments, local experience and history, or other specialized experience.
4. **Building relationships.** Asking, considering, and involving people in work and decisions that affect them will naturally create and enhance relationships with them. These relationships may prove a useful foundation and resource on other work later.

Regulations and requirements. Many programs, laws, and rules require some level of public participation (see [Chapter 30](#)).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN WISCONSIN DNR: Policy, Philosophy, Organizational Structure

*To be successful, [public] participation must be a management strategy,
a way of doing business, not a series of add-on activities.*

--Wilbur A. Wiedman, Jr.

Guidance Statement

Many philosophies and proven public participation principles guide DNR's commitment to involving the public. The following statement outlines our guidance:

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources embraces public participation, recognizing the legitimacy and value of the public influencing natural resources decisions in the state. On significant issues, open processes with reasonable access for all those interested and/or affected will be the standard and norm for agency policy setting, decision making, planning, and priority setting.

When the DNR does not use public participation, it will do so as a deliberate decision and for good cause. For example, public safety, legal or confidentiality constraints, and crisis or emergency situations might all result in more closed decision-making processes.

The DNR supports legitimate public participation. It will only ask for public input and involvement in situations where it will seriously consider that input or in which the public's input is likely to affect or inform the decision. The agency will avoid situations in which only some segments of the public will have access to a decision-making process, while others have little or no reasonable access. DNR will strive to be fair and honest to all.

At the same time, the DNR recognizes limits to its own authority and control. Some laws governing permitting decisions allow the agency to consider only certain factors – e.g. whether certain air quality limits will be exceeded, whether the proposal will harm the wells of a public drinking water utility – and not other factors, including other impacts or public sentiment. (Often in these circumstances, local governments have some authority that can consider public sentiment.) In all cases, the agency will be clear on who are the decision makers, what is the decision-making process, and what are the limits to the decision-making authority. It will not ask for opinions and ideas that cannot affect the decision. It will encourage meaningful involvement wherever input can make a difference.

Strategic Plan and Agency Philosophy

The DNR's strategic plan articulates its public participation policy. Within the strategic plan, the agency's mission statement, the first strategic goal, and several of the stated agency values describe the agency's public participation philosophy and policy (Figure 20-1).

Figure 20-1

Excerpts From Wisconsin DNR's Strategic Plan

Wisconsin DNR's Mission

To protect and enhance our natural resources:
our air, land and water;
our wildlife, fish and forests
and the ecosystems that sustain all life.

To provide a healthy, sustainable environment
and a full range of outdoor opportunities.

To ensure the right of all people
to use and enjoy these resources
in their work and leisure.

*To work with people
to understand each other's views
and to carry out the public will.
And in this partnership
consider the future
and generations to follow.*

(emphasis added)

Making People Our Strength

The Goal
People, organizations and officials work together to provide Wisconsin with healthy, sustainable ecosystems. In partnership with all publics we find innovative ways to set priorities, accomplish tasks and evaluate successes to keep Wisconsin in the forefront of environmental quality and science-based management.

The Strategies

A. Involve individuals, businesses, governments, tribes and organizations in managing natural resources and protecting human and wildlife health, by sharing knowledge, responsibility, decision-making, recognition, and costs.

B. Provide leadership, information, education, technical assistance, and outreach so that people can make informed environmental decisions and be actively involved in setting local and statewide priorities.

Our Values

Respect People
We serve the people of the state, treating them as we want to be treated, using fair and open processes and working with them as partners in protecting the environment. We appreciate the diversity of our society and strive to reflect that diversity in our work force. We respect the differing values held by our publics. We recognize that human needs for economic and cultural security are tied to a high quality environment.

Share Responsibility
We work in partnership with people, a wide variety of public and private organizations, and with governments at all levels to share the responsibility for managing Wisconsin's natural resources.

Core Values

The DNR recognizes and promotes the core values of public participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

IAP2 Core Values

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed the "IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation" for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes. These core values were developed over a two-year period with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation that cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries. The purpose of these core values is to help make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. The public participation process communicates the interests and meets the process needs of participants.
4. The public participation process actively seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected.
5. The public participation process involves participants in defining how they participate.
6. The public participation process provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. The public participation process communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Key Principles and Evaluation Criteria

How can you involve the public in ways that uphold these core values? Some key public participation principles can help guide a public participation process so it reflects the core values and meets the process and procedural needs of the agency and those of the affected and interested organizations and individuals, including agency staff.

When designing and applying a public participation process, these principles can become useful criteria or performance measures for evaluating the process.

Openness and Transparency. The core of decision-making should be transparent, as opposed to a black box. Allow the public to see the process, any weighting or trade-off, and the logic or reasoning behind the decisions. Note that this applies not only to the big, capitalized, final decisions, but the intermediary decisions throughout your process. Realize that these intermediary decisions often open some paths and close others, thus helping to shape that final decision.

Some questions, asked during the process design and throughout the process, will help you evaluate the openness and transparency of your process:

- Do people have access and visibility at all levels in the decision-making process? Are there regular and ongoing opportunities to participate?
- Is the process open? Is the process clear? Do people know about it? Can they reasonably participate?
- People need a reason to participate and invest time. Have you helped articulate what's at stake for them in this decision so they can rationally decide how involved they want to be?
- Is important information available, useable, clear, easy to access?

- Are people able to see how the decision will be made? Can they find out how and why specific decisions were made? Or does all information and input go into a “black box” at some point in the process, with a decision coming out the other end?

Access. Unless all participants are at the table, the process of public engagement is deeply flawed. Sometimes you must make an extra investment to get everyone to the table.

A solid public participation effort does not exclude critical voices, though those voices sometimes lack the skills, resources, time, confidence, or trust to participate. To find ways to include them you may have to modify your process, help them develop the ability to participate, or even slow the process down.

By sticking with the “traditional audiences” and the “safer” entities, we lose the ability to get new ideas and bring in other communities of perspective. Consider who is missing from the process and how can you engage them.

Some questions, asked during the process design and throughout the process, will help you evaluate the accessibility of your process:

- Are all key stakeholders participating? If not, why aren't key stakeholders participating? How can you meet their needs so they can participate?
- Who is missing from the process? How can you engage them?
- How can you give voice to the under-heard?
- Are scientific and other experts involved?

Adequate Information and Special Expertise. A good process will make timely, understandable information available to those interested in or involved in your process. In addition, all parties will have equal access to information. In this way, people can make more informed choices and add more value to your work.

We certainly want to include experts with specific knowledge. We also want the experts to understand the critical involvement of others. All need access to the knowledge the experts bring. All, including the experts, need access to the local, social, and other knowledge the “nonexperts” bring.

Some questions, asked during the process design and throughout the process, will help you evaluate the adequacy of information:

- What information will people need to understand this process and this project/initiative/decision?
- How can they get that information?
- If you are providing information, is it in a form and language they can understand? How do you know?
- How easily can people get the information? How do they know it's available? In what ways can you make it easily available?
- Does your process take advantage of available knowledge – specialized and expert knowledge, local knowledge, social knowledge, economic knowledge, etc.?

Engaging. Participants can help identify whether the process meets their needs. But remember, the process is most likely to NOT be meeting the needs of those NOT participating. Do people who might be interested and/or affected know about the process and what is at stake for them? If so, why are they not participating? Ask them and strive to engage them. Ultimately, of course, it is their decision whether to participate. However, recognize if a critical viewpoint is not engaged, the ultimate decision or design is likely to be more flawed.

In a Canadian example, the decision makers working on issues of juvenile crime slowed their process down when they realized neither juveniles committing crimes nor their parents were partaking. They had to stop and help those populations develop the ability to become part of such a process.

Some questions, asked during the process design and throughout the process, will help you evaluate how engaging and satisfactory your process is:

- Are people sticking with the process or have they dropped out? If they've dropped out, why? Ask them.
- Do people who might be interested know what's at stake? Are they joining the process? If not, why? Ask them.
- Who is missing? Why? How can you bring them in?

Accountability. The principles and policies included in this guidance document imply certain promises to the public. Similarly, any public participation process implies promises (refer back to Figure 10-1 in [Chapter 10](#)). Promises in turn imply accountability. When we involve the public in a natural resources process, we are accountable to them and to the agency. Check assumptions and make sure everyone is interpreting their role and the decision-making process similarly.

Keeping a written list of implicit and explicit promises is a good idea. Have the project team and guidance team sign the promises, literally. As staff changes occur during the course of the project, make sure new players understand what promises have been made. New players should also sign off on such promises.

Throughout the process, ask yourself whether you are keeping promises and proving to be accountable:

- What promises are you making? Look at how you describe your process and how you describe how decisions will be made? How likely are you to be able to keep those promises?
- How specific are your promises? Are they clear or can different people interpret them differently?
- What promises have you made, explicitly or implicitly? Do you know? Have you kept them?
- If you have not been able to keep them or need to change those promises, why? Have you explained this to people? Do they understand?

Evaluation. A well-developed public participation process will include an evaluation element. Consider whether the public can help develop or refine the evaluation process.

Already mentioned above, some aspects for you to measure and consider are:

- Transparency – is the process open and accessible?
- Representative – are all relevant stakeholders at “the table?” Who decides who are the participants? Are the participants consulting and engaging their communities? How diverse are the perspectives?
- Reporting – Is there open and public reporting on progress, including decision rationale and how to be involved?
- Expectations – Ask yourself “What are reasonable expectations?” Then take those expectations to the community to consider and amend.
- Process Needs – Are we meeting the public's process needs? Ask them.
- Influence – Can the input actually affect the decisions? How?

Public Participation Responsibilities and Functions Within DNR

Individuals, Programs, and Teams. Each person, program, and team that formulates policy, makes or proposes significant agency decisions, or develops plans is responsible for appropriate and adequate public participation in their project(s). They must live up to the agency's policies related to public participation, as defined earlier in this chapter.

Some project teams or programs identify specific staff or consultants to be responsible for public participation for their project(s). Those staff or consultants have even greater obligations. They are uniquely charged with overseeing the process and being sure it reflects the DNR public participation policy statement, core values, and principles described in this chapter. They are ethically bound to advocate for sound public participation practices, including that the public's role in the decision-making process is carefully considered and accurately portrayed. They are the protectors of the promises made to the public about the process. These public participation practitioners need to ensure the commitments made to the public by the decision maker are genuine and capable of implementation.

Decision Makers. Decision makers have additional responsibility to make sure their decisions seriously consider the range of public opinions, values, ideas, and knowledge; that the public participation process is genuine and credible; and that sufficient resources are available for the public process.

The DNR's Public Participation Program. The Bureau of Communication and Education houses the Public Participation Program. Led by the public participation manager, this program strives to provide the DNR and its staff with the resources needed to continually improve how it involves the public in its work and mission. This program is the agency's primary focus for public participation expertise and policy.

Facets of the DNR's Public Participation Program include or will include:

- **Expertise:** provide a high level of expertise and experience. Develop and shape the DNR's business plan for public participation.
- **Policy and planning:** be a key voice within the agency for policy and planning related to the public's role in DNR decision making.
- **Guidance:** write, revise, disseminate guidance on public participation.
- **Direct consultation:** directly advise teams and projects on ways to approach or improve involving the public.
- **Training:** identify and/or provide top notch training in public participation to meet the range of needs of DNR employees.
- **Consultants:** provide connections to quality consultants in the field of public participation, assist programs and projects that want to identify and potentially hire outside help in their public participation efforts.
- **Professional Connections:** maintain connections and partnerships with public participation practitioners outside the DNR. Keep current on trends and experiences within the field. Maintain a high level of expertise. Provide DNR experience and views on a statewide, national, and even international level. Bring experiences of others back to the agency. Share DNR's experience with others.
- **Evaluation:** develop performance measures, parameters, and guidance on how to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation efforts.
- **Clearinghouse:** be a single repository for information about public participation principles, practices, case studies, and DNR efforts.
- **Internal participation:** be a resource on ways to better involve employees in decisions the agency makes that affect them.
- **Special Initiatives:** pursue special initiatives, particularly those that give voice to population groups DNR has not routinely heard.

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- Database(s): work toward developing a comprehensive and useful stakeholder/public database for the agency to help identify and contact people and organizations interested in facets of our work.
- Technologies: explore how new tools and technologies can enhance our public participation efforts, including web-based interactions and computer-assisted meetings.
- Funding: pursue grants and other funding mechanisms to augment and support any of the above functions and initiatives.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, LIMITATIONS, AND BEYOND

The last chapter discussed the philosophy and principles behind involving the public in our decision making. Legal requirements and limitations may also affect what you do to involve the public. While the legal requirements may not be the sole or the driving force behind your public participation process and design, your process certainly must fulfill those requirements and reflect legal constraints.

If a decision is made with processes as required by law, it will likely hold up to legal challenges. If not, it may not. People who do not like your decision can use legal shortcomings to stall or overthrow that decision. You are responsible to assure the legal requirements for the public decision process are met.

Integrate what is legally required with what you want to do to accomplish your objectives beyond the legal requirements.

Permits and Approvals

Often laws and rules governing permits and approvals require some type of public participation. Most often the requirements involve a public notice a certain amount of time in advance, a comment period, and possibly hearings. Requirements vary from law to law and can change over time. Consult the affiliated program's attorneys.

You may also want to look up requirements in rules and statutes on the web site of the Revisor of Statutes – the administrative code at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/> and the state statutes at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html>. The Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) specifies the environmental assessment and environmental impact statement processes and can also be found at the Revisor of Statutes' web site (s. [1.11](#), Wis. Stats., and ch. [NR 150](#), Wis. Adm. Code).

The law cannot only specify what types of public participation opportunities must be provided, but it also sometimes restricts what DNR may consider when making a decision about a permit or other approval. For example, during 1999-2001, DNR received a permit request from a water bottling company. Under the Wisconsin law governing high capacity wells at that time, DNR could deny a high capacity well application only if it impaired a municipal water supply. Essentially this was a legal limitation on the authority of the DNR and what it could consider in making a decision. While the public may have had many other concerns about a high capacity well permit – jobs, traffic, private well impacts, ecosystem impacts, property values, etc. – DNR could not consider those issues in making such a permit decision.

Such legal limitations often prove frustrating both for the public and the agency. The public expects to have all its concerns considered; however, such expectations cannot always be met by the DNR. Misunderstanding and hard feelings often result. To help alleviate such misunderstandings, you should repeatedly try to clarify DNR's role and limitations. In clear and plain language, admit DNR cannot always meet some public expectations. Also try to identify what other decision makers or processes might be able to consider the broader concerns (e.g. local zoning boards). Perhaps ask other decision makers to co-host our public meetings so they can hear and address these broader concerns.

Open Meetings Requirements

When the Department holds meetings or hearings, interested and affected parties expect us to give them notice so they can participate and comment in a meaningful way. There are legal requirements that must be met for notice, and sometimes for comment periods and for placement of review documents.

The DNR's requirements and policy related to open meetings and notices can be found in the Media Relations Handbook, [8505.1](#). In particular, the [Appendix](#) describes the meeting and hearing notice requirements and [Chapter 2](#) of the Handbook tells you how to post a meeting notice. The meeting and hearing notice requirements are also appended to this guidance.

Public Hearings

While many laws require public hearings, with minimum notice and comment periods, state law does not define "public hearing" and the pertinent laws often do not dictate a specific hearing format.

Basically a public hearing is a meeting in which people can voice their thoughts and opinions about some proposal after they have had a reasonable opportunity to get information about the proposal. Usually this includes a formal record of the "testimony" that has been given.

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Sometimes traditional hearing structures can further polarize the different segments of a community or society about a controversial proposal. Often the agency appears to be in the middle of the debate between factions or to be defending a position. In addition, traditional hearing structures are not conducive to problem solving or searching for common ground.

Often, you can modify the format and structure of a public hearing to be more useful and to better meet the needs of both the public and the decision makers. Modest changes may dramatically affect the feel, flow, and usefulness of a hearing.

Federal Programs and Grants

If you are working under a federal law or grant, you may have other requirements for public participation governed by federal statutes, as a grant requirement, or by an agency's policy. Again, check with program attorneys, be familiar with the grant and contract requirements affecting you, and consider affiliated laws. For example, the federal Superfund program spells out how community involvement plans are developed for Superfund projects.

EPA is currently rewriting its overall policies for public participation (<http://www.epa.gov/publicinvolvement/>).

Tribal Rights and Participation

Native American tribes are sovereign governments. Treaties and agreements shape our relationship with the tribes and their roles in our decisions. An attorney in the Bureau of Legal Services maintains expertise in tribal rights, and this specialist can guide you when working with tribes. If you are working on a project in the ceded territories, consult with the Bureau of Legal Services.

Remember there are cultures and traditions unique to the tribes, just as there are differences among the cultures of different nations. Be sensitive to these differences when working across such cultural lines. If you are inexperienced working with the tribes (or any groups with a different culture) seek advice from someone experienced and knowledgeable about the culture. Do not assume the tribes will participate in the same way as other segments of the public in public meetings and forums.

In working with tribes, you need to recognize their status as a sovereign may mean that any effort to restrict or direct their activities may not be possible without their consent on tribal lands. When working with tribes or tribal issues on nontribal lands, work with the Bureau of Legal Services to review the state's authority.

Other Rules, Decisions, and Processes

Other decisions by the agency may also have public participation requirements or limitations. For example, the administrative rule that spells out how we write master plans for state-owned properties contains significant legally mandated requirements for public participation. The master-planning rule outlines minimum requirements for who to involve and at which stages in the planning process the public should have input. (For more details, refer to s. [NR 44.04](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/), Wis. Adm. Code: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/>).

As with permits and approvals, other processes have varying requirements that change with time. Consult with the appropriate program attorney to be sure you are meeting minimal legal requirements with your public participation process.

Beyond Legal Requirements

Always remember the importance of meeting legal requirements. But also always consider whether you should do more to involve people. The legal requirements are often minimal. The rest of the chapters in this guidance will help you go beyond legal requirements to benefit from the broader perspectives the public can bring to your process.

BASIC APPROACHES TO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This chapter provides a basic approach you can use to design your public participation effort. The “Tools and Techniques” section at the end of the chapter provides resources for more in-depth help.

Six Basic Steps

You have identified the project, problem, or initiative upon which you are embarking and you need to consider involving the public. What do you do?

Often managers know they should involve others in their decisions and projects, but they don’t know how. A step-by-step process can help you think through the design of an effective public participation process. The following six basic steps will lead you:

Six Basic Steps For Creating a Public Participation Plan

1. Define what are you trying to achieve and what your objectives are for involving the public.
2. Determine who you need to include and why. Consider the roles they might play.
3. Describe the environment in which you are operating and consider how it might impact your public process.
4. Write the plan details including how and when to involve people.
5. Determine a budget and needed resources to carry out the plan. Clarify who will carry out the plan’s elements.
6. Define how you will know if your plan worked.

Recognize these steps are often iterative. As you work through any one step, you may need to go back and adjust decisions made at earlier steps. This is normal. In particular, you may often go through steps one and two synchrony.

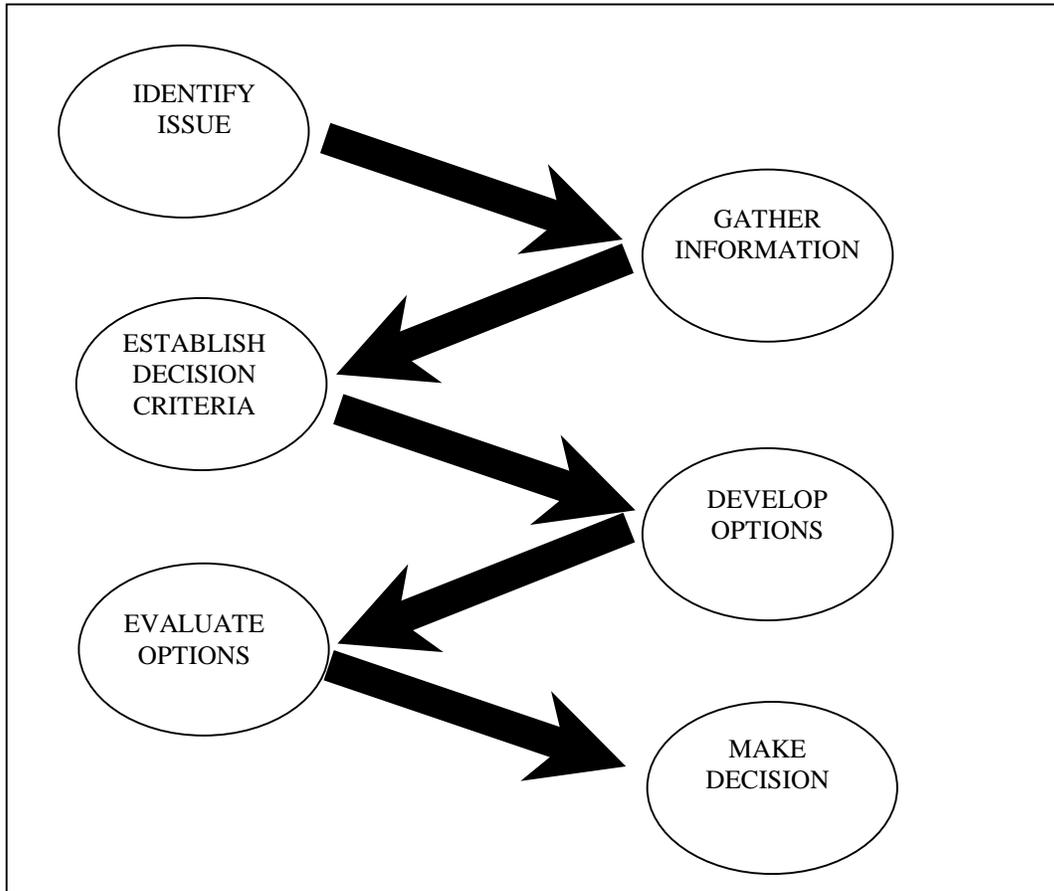
Step 1: Define what are you trying to achieve and what your objectives are for involving the public.

First, you must define the objectives for involving the public so your public participation process is tailored to needs, purpose, and intentions. This also helps keep expectations realistic and helps people understand their role and the anticipated level of involvement.

Think about the problem to be solved or the decision to be made. You will need to work with the stakeholders to clarify the problem or decision. You will make little progress in your initiative if there is no clarity or agreement about the subject and scope of the discussion. Clarify the breadth of the issue and what is or is not “on the table.”

Consider the decision-making process you will use. Diagram or write out that process, showing the beginning and intermediate steps and decision points. At each step and decision point, what will be the role of the public and the purpose of your public participation effort? How will you use public input or involvement? What value and information can the public bring to the decision? Who will make the decision and how? In other words, link the public participation process to the decision-making process right from the project’s start. A sample generic decision-making process is illustrated in Figure 40-1.

Figure 40-1



The Public Participation Spectrum (Figure 10-1 of [Chapter 10](#)) lists five broad objectives for public participation. Each represents a different level of public involvement:

- **Inform:** Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and/or solutions.
- **Consult:** Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.
- **Involve:** Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate:** Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- **Empower:** Place the final decision making in the hands of the public.

Realize you may have different levels of involvement and objectives at different stages of your decision-making process or with different segments of the stakeholders. Also, notice that each objective carries with it a promise to the public about their level of involvement. Be sure you can honor that promise before you commit to it. Be clear about what roles the public will play in the decision making and who makes the decision. Never solicit input or involvement if you do not intend to use it.

Your selection of a level of involvement for the public should consider both the agency's perspective and the perceptions and desires of the affected public. What is their need and expectation? Subgroups or individuals from the affected interests can give you valuable insight into this and other aspects of your public involvement plan.

You can use the five broad objectives on the spectrum as a starting point for describing the role of the public and their participation throughout your process. But add details specific to your project. Some examples of more specific objectives for public participation are:

- clarify if there is a problem or need and, if so, what it is
- identify issues that need to be addressed in a project
- gather specific types of information or data to help frame the initiative
- understand the full range of needs and concerns about a proposal, problem, or situation
- identify all the alternatives to solving a problem
- get feedback on a particular draft or proposal or specific element of the project
- list and analyze the full range of impacts of any given solution to a problem
- have the public design or help design a solution to a problem or situation
- manage conflicts around a particular issue
- develop collaborative solutions to a problem
- understand other priorities for resources or future work
- involve the community with an initiative from the beginning through implementation, sharing ownership and responsibility
- recruit volunteers to implement a plan

Appendix B includes a case study entitled “[Working Toward Common Ground](#)” that is an example of writing clear and specific objectives for public participation for an initiative.

Step 2: Determine who you need to include and why. Consider the roles they might play.

Who needs to be involved? Early in the development of your public participation plan, as you are defining the plan’s objectives, identify stakeholders. Stakeholders are people and organizations who have a stake in the decision – people, organizations, agencies, interest groups, anyone who will be or believe they will be affected by the decisions being made.

Identifying stakeholders is an activity where the cliché “two heads are better than one” holds. Get other people to help you identify stakeholders. This will help keep you from forgetting a critical group or viewpoint. If there is a geographic focus to your project, make sure people with a history in the locale help identify who might be interested. And ask stakeholders themselves who is missing from the process.

One way to list or brainstorm stakeholders is by interest – environmentalists, conservationists, businesses, tribes, local government officials, skiers, etc.—people and organizations interested in one or more of the issues presented by the problem or project you are working on. List the issues presented by the project then list those interested in each issue.

Sometimes a stakeholder check-off list can help get you started. Having such a check-off list for your area of work can help you quickly list people and organizations that might have a stake in a specific project. But don’t stop there. Consider whether each project has any other stakeholders not represented by your list – someone unique to the problem or area.

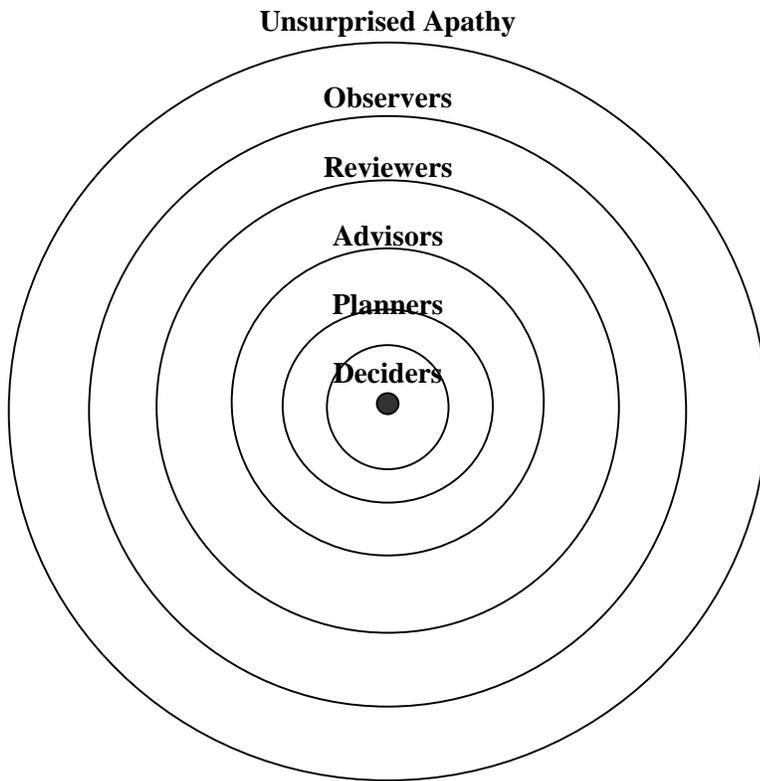
Stakeholders can be defined by more than interest. You may also want to consider dimensions such as geographic or demographic representation.

Also consider the stakeholders' varied levels of interest. Some people will be extremely engaged, attending every meeting and consistently being involved. Others will comment only occasionally. Some might know your process is going on, but will not become engaged.

This concept is represented by the Orbits of Participation (Figure 40-2), a model developed by Lorenz Aggens of INVOLVE in Wilmette, Illinois. This model helps visualize the need for opportunities to be engaged at varying levels at different steps of the process. Some people may be willing to work collaboratively with you, but others just want to give input or be informed.

Figure 40-2

Orbits of Participation
By Lorenz Aggens



The model shows a decision-making center surrounded by “orbits” of activity. The orbits closer to the center have greater activity and energy within them. People in a closer orbit may have more influence but will need to devote more energy to the process and to their involvement.

This model clarifies there is no single public, but different levels of public based on differing levels of interest and ability to participate, even within a single interest group. The design of a public involvement plan must take into account all levels of the public. Your public process should provide for the needs of those in all orbits.

People may move from orbit to orbit. The outermost orbit includes people who know of your project, but choose not to participate. People uninformed of the project or decision are outside all the orbits.

Realize people and organizations may move from one orbit to another throughout your project as their interest, awareness, availability, and priorities change.

As you are identifying your stakeholders, think about what roles and responsibilities they may have and how people will be involved. Some possible public roles are: leader, partner, source of information, decision maker, reviewer, designer/planner, data collector, and conduit to other members of the community. Consider ways the interested parties can help design the public participation process, including identifying the stakeholders and deciding what processes and techniques to use to involve people. In addition, there might be a role for the public in evaluating the process and progress.

Finally, think about:

- Who's missing, under-represented, or unrepresented? Who should be "at the table," but isn't there?
- Have you included the people who are going to be most threatened by the project – those who will most hate it? Those who will most likely try to block it? These people may make the task less pleasant, but their involvement is critical. If you leave them out, you give them a valid reason to later veto the outcome.
- Are there any special needs – language barriers, physical barriers, social barriers – to consider?
- How do you build interest for your project among people who aren't there, but you need there? How can your project meet some of their needs?

Step 3: Describe the environment in which you are operating and consider how it might impact your public process.

Think about the history, social milieu, and context in the community or area you will be working. Is the environment one of apathy, distrust, or nervousness? Is there a history of conflict? Past conflict might have occurred between the DNR and one or more groups, among the groups, or among other segments of the community.

What is the recent history about the community or the topic? Are there successes you can build on or open wounds to be cautious of? What is the political climate and who are the local opinion leaders and real decision makers (not always the same as the official decision makers)?

Think about the level of cooperation among the stakeholders and the current attitudes about solving problems.

Once you have learned about this social environment, think about how it might impact your process. For example, past conflicts probably have left a sense of distrust, anger, disrespect, and stereotyping. If so, you will need to use techniques that help build trust, create a climate of openness, and help people to find sources of information they consider credible. You may have to work extra hard to create forums where people will really listen to each other. You may need to enlist the help of those with special skills – gifted facilitators, even mediators.

Similarly, if the community has had a bad experience recently, you may want to avoid using techniques reminiscent of that bad experience. For example, some communities have a distrust of open house meeting formats or of being separated into small groups. Be willing to use meeting techniques that meet the public's needs as well as your own.

And capitalize on opportunities within the community – existing community networks, gathering places, community and opinion leaders, etc.

Step 4: Write the plan details including how and when to involve people.

Now that you are clear on your objectives, stakeholders, and the environment you'll be working in, you can actually draft your plan for how and when you engage the stakeholders.

In Step One, you laid out the decision-making process you will use and how to link the public participation process to the decision-making process. Now you can use that diagram of your decision-making process to add the details, tying public participation techniques to each step.

Each public participation technique or tool is good for some purposes and poor for others. In addition, each carries a cost – time and resources you will have to spend to use it AND time and resources the public will have to spend to participate in it. (See “Tools and Techniques” below for more information.)

Start to match tools and ideas to each of the decision points you identified in your process. Pick tools that will get you the kind of participation, information, or result you need at that step. Make sure they will also meet the needs of the participants for that step, without overtaxing their time. Look for practical tools. Look at creative tools. Choose multiple tools so you can address the interest levels in the various “orbits” of participation.

Balance the level and amount of public participation to the problem and decision at hand. More complex and controversial problems or situations with larger scopes or greater public interest generally require more structured and rigorous public participation processes. For some decisions, a simple, straight-forward plan will be just right.

You will also have to plan for any information or resources that people will need before they can participate meaningfully. Sometimes you can provide the needed information. Sometimes others can bring information to the process.

Step by step, design your process, with help or input from the affected people and organizations. The process should be clear, timely, and relevant. Information needs to be objective, accurate, and understandable. The project purpose should be clear, as should any constraints or limitations. Include steps for letting people know what decisions have been made already, why, and what affect their participation had. People who have taken the time to be involved deserve to understand what impact their involvement has or has not had, and why.

Timelines need to be reasonable, including final deadlines. Make sure people get adequate notice and time for review or meetings. Have the resources in place to keep the process moving so it doesn’t languish or disappear. Expecting people to stay engaged in extremely lengthy processes can be just as unreasonable as expecting to accomplish too much too fast. If you have specific time constraints, make sure your process honors them by designing the process around hard deadlines and requirements.

Finally, your public process needs to be flexible. Earlier steps usually influence later steps. Your initial public participation process design may be quite specific in the first few steps, but get more general for succeeding steps. You and the stakeholders will be learning and modifying the process as you proceed.

Step 5: Determine a budget and needed resources to carry out the plan. Clarify who will carry out the plan’s elements.

At this point you have enough to start estimating the costs of your public participation effort. Usually, the biggest need is time. Think carefully about who might be able to help carry out the plan and how much effort will be needed. Sometimes members of the public can help, serving on a planning or program committee, for example.

Among other needs, you will want to identify at least one contact person. This is someone who will take calls and comments from the public, including following up on calls and comments and making sure questions get answered. Also identify someone to maintain mailing lists and files, arrange meetings and other logistics, and make sure mailings get out and web pages get updated. On some projects, this administrative work can be a time-consuming job.

Other costs might include:

- developing informational packets, progress reports, and other materials;
- printing and postage;
- designing and maintaining a web page and/or newsletter;
- meeting rooms, facilitators, food and beverages, and meeting supplies;
- travel costs;
- promotions and public relations to advertise your project and opportunities to participate;

- graphics, including any needed GIS or other maps; and
- contracting public participation consultants and/or facilitators.

If you hire outside consultants for your project, make sure the contract clearly identifies which expenses and duties are covered. Make sure to cover potential iterations of steps and other contingencies. Consult with DNR's public participation program on how to find and evaluate good outside public participation consultants.

Take the time to judge whether your plan is realistic, whether the resources are available to carry it out, and, if not, how you can either adjust the plan or find the needed resources.

Also consider whether segments of the public or stakeholders will have or need resources to participate effectively. For example, in some cases, project proponents or small grants provide a community with funds to hire a consultant or get other needs met.

Step 6: Define how you will know if your plan worked.

Build into your public participation plan how you will evaluate your process. Look at the objectives you wrote, including the affiliated promises. Were they kept? Did your process honor the core values (see [Chapter 20](#))?

Refer back to [Chapter 20](#) for additional evaluation criteria.

By identifying evaluation criteria at the start of the process, you can collect evaluate throughout the process. Obviously, you will be learning at each step of your process and can refine your public participation efforts. And you will have collected good information for a final evaluation.

If attendance at meetings is low, one common mistake is to assume no one cares about your project or that everyone agrees with what you do. There are many reasons people may not be coming – they didn't know about the meeting, they didn't understand how the project might affect them, they couldn't make the meeting, they were nervous about coming, they were too busy or couldn't get away, they don't think their attendance and input will matter, they don't feel comfortable in public settings, etc. If no one is participating, stop and find out why. If particular interest groups are not coming, stop and find out why. Then take steps to improve the process.

Tools and Techniques

As mentioned, all tools and techniques are good for some purposes and bad at others. Similarly, different tools and techniques carry different costs and require different levels of commitment. For example:

- Open houses are a good format for people to get information and chat informally. They are generally a comfortable setting for people who are afraid to speak in a public setting. They are a terrible way for people to hear a diversity of opinions and to try to understand the needs and thoughts of others. Thus they are poor for increasing understanding, managing conflict, or collaboration.
- Public hearings are designed for people to get opinions on the record. They can have their voice heard by everyone present. They are lousy for mutual problem solving or searching for common ground. They also can be dominated by a vocal, persistent, and determined few, disenfranchising others in the community.
- Web pages and newsletters can be a great way to get information out. They are generally not good for exchanging ideas. Web pages can also be great as information repositories, but obviously you need other systems for those not well-connected electronically.
- Nominal Group Technique (a meeting tool for small groups) is good for identifying issues and, sometimes, for setting priorities. It is not as good at designing alternatives or flushing out the full impacts, benefits, and costs of proposals.
- Design workshops can foster involvement and collaboration. People can really work together to develop solutions. But they are intensive and require time and commitment by both the convenors and the participants.

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- Samoan Circles are a meeting technique designed specifically to allow people to air their views on issues where conflict is high. They will not likely resolve the conflict or solve the problem, but they do allow people to be heard from all sides of the issue without putting the agency in the middle of the debate.
- Other than one-on-one meetings or “coffee klatches” at their office or home, meetings generally are more difficult for people to attend, particularly if their participation is not part of their job. People are busy, they may need to take off work, find a baby sitter, arrange transportation, etc.
- Mail-back surveys, forms, and exercises can be very easy for participants if they are not too complex and are well designed. However, they do not allow participants to learn from each other or to interact with the agency staff.
- Large central meetings are generally easier for the DNR. We have to make fewer arrangements, attend fewer meetings, travel less, and can try to talk to everyone “at once.” They allow stakeholders to hear all perspectives at once. But, obviously, they require travel and also can be intimidating for many people who are very uncomfortable speaking in public.

Only logistics and imagination limit the list of possible tools and techniques. The best way to get exposure to a range of techniques is through public participation training courses. Public participation professionals, within the Department or private contractors, can help design a tool for your needs and resources. Publications can also give descriptions of tools and techniques.

Several resources are available for you to learn more tools and techniques and to use them more effectively:

- [Appendix A](#) includes a manual, *Involving Citizens: A Guide to Conducting Citizen Participation*, by Wilbur A. Wiedman, Jr. Mr. Wiedman developed this guide, under contract with the Wisconsin DNR, to help local governments meet the community involvement requirements of the recycling law. The Wiedman guide is a how-to manual that can help you design and carry out a public participation process. It also includes descriptions of a range of tools and techniques.
- Training in public participation is available from the Department’s public participation program. This program is also a good source of information about outside training courses.
- The appendix includes some case studies and a menu of tools and techniques, with a brief description of each and some of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The agency’s public participation program has a collection of public participation manuals and reference materials, as well as other available resources.

APPENDIX A:

Involving Citizens

A Guide to Conducting Citizen Participation

By Wilbur A. Wiedman, Jr.

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FOREWORD

Decision-making and project planning are an integral part of every public employee's and official's duties. And for many of you, there aren't enough hours in the day to get everything done. Agency professionals with whom you work have expertise and experience which equip them to make technically sound decisions.

So, it is fair to ask the question, "Why should I do citizen participation? Why should I make room in my workload for it?"

The answers to those questions are two-fold:

First, as a public official, you should make the effort to involve citizens in your decision-making because it is the right thing to do. Every decision you make impacts people, some more than others. Some for the better, and some, from their standpoint, for the worse. Because actions you take on behalf of your agency do impact people, those affected expect to be informed of what is about to happen and they expect — and rightly so — that to whatever extent possible their values and needs will be heard and considered. They, after all, have to live with the changes your action will cause.

Second, as a public official, you should make the effort to involve citizens in your decision-making because they will make themselves heard one way or another, sooner or later. In citizen participation, consent can be built. Goals can be set. Problems can be aired and addressed in a problem-solving atmosphere. Agency officials and the public can work together to find a way to get done what needs to be done for the good of the community, the environment, or the schools. Without consent and a problem-solving approach like citizen participation, the values and concerns of today's sophisticated, activist citizens will be heard in courtrooms and through other project blocking tactics that will ultimately present a greater and troublesome workload.

So why do citizen participation? Because it is a logical approach to problem-solving and planning that minimizes conflict.

It can lead to stronger decisions. Professionals don't have all the answers. The fresh perspective of empowered citizens can lead to creative approaches agencies never thought possible.

The author, Bill Wiedman, cites six objectives and potential values of embracing citizen participation. They are:

- To inform the public;
- To enhance the accountability of government decisions through increased opportunity for citizen participation;
- To build consensus by resolving conflict;
- To enhance the legitimacy of the government decision-making process;
- To build trust between client citizens and government producers of services; and
- To produce better decisions.

As you read this section and inevitably reflect on decisions and projects which have been steeped in conflict or have gone poorly, I urge you to apply these six objectives and consider how citizen participation might have changed their outcome.

INTRODUCTION

Because of the complexities of citizen participation, it is almost impossible to write a “cookbook” which says, “In this situation, use process A, technique #3.” Whether you are entering into a recycling program, a planning or decision-making process, a nuclear waste disposal siting issue or developing a master plan for a county park, citizen participation must have a unique design that fits your particular situation. There is a set of commonly used techniques; finding one appropriate to your particular project requires some assessment process.

The purpose of this section is to provide that assessment information about citizen participation, and a way to think through your situation. This information should help you cope with the many unanticipated circumstances which can arise when designing and implementing citizen participation programs.

This section covers a number of topics in three distinct subsections:

Subsection I describes the basic philosophy and principles of citizen participation.

Subsection II provides a basic approach to analyzing your project and developing a citizen participation program appropriate to that situation. The section also contains detailed descriptions of many of the most frequently used citizen participation techniques, and a catalogue containing brief descriptions of a number of other techniques which have value in specialized circumstances.

Subsection III consists of the final task of your citizen participation program, analysis of public input and evaluating your citizen participation program.

If you want to answer questions such as, “What is citizen participation? When is citizen participation needed? Who is the public?,” read Subsection I.

If you are designing a citizen participation program and are already familiar with the basic principles of citizen participation, then the place to start is Section II. If you are designing a citizen participation program and have completed the thought process, then you are ready for information contained in this subsection on meetings and other techniques.

However, you should not start with selecting techniques when designing a citizen participation program. In order for citizen participation to be effective, it must be thoroughly integrated into the decision-making process. Subsection II provides a detailed discussion on how to ensure this integration. Citizen participation techniques should not be selected until you have thoroughly analyzed your situation and know what you are trying to accomplish with the public, which segments of the public you must reach, and the special circumstances which could effect selection of those techniques.

Once you have designed your plan, thoughts on how to handle the input from the public and measure your effectiveness are discussed in Subsection III. If you wish to go beyond the confines of this guide, additional references are provided.

Please keep in mind throughout your reading of this material that citizen participation can be simple or complex but the assessment process of what you do needs to be consistently applied.

Enjoy yourself!

Bill Wiedman, Author

Subsection I

What is citizen participation?

The definition

Known by many names, "community involvement, citizen involvement, inform and involve, public participation", **citizen participation is the total process of including the "publics" in your planning and decision making process.** To be successful, citizen participation must be a management strategy, a way of doing business. Citizen participation is not a series of add-on activities as part of an "after the fact" decision-making process. Rather it makes public input an integral part of your planning, policy making, or decision-making process. Finally, citizen participation is an attitude. This attitude proclaims, "those that have a stake in what we do as decision makers, need to have a say in our decisions that can benefit or cost them." Citizen participation is an opportunity for your "publics" to obtain issue by issue accountability within an administrative and political process.

The fundamentals

Citizen participation is the process by which the views of all parties interested in a decision, (interested and affected individuals, organizations, customers, other state and local governments, and federal agencies), are integrated into the decision-making process. The citizen participation process provides a means by which public concerns, needs, and values are identified prior to decisions, so that decisions reflect, to the greatest extent possible, (given environmental, financial, legal, and technical constraints), the views of the public. When citizen participation is successful, it results in a better understanding of public needs and concerns, and also results in education of the public regarding the decision maker's responsibilities. Citizen participation is two-way communication, with the overall goal being a better, more acceptable decision.



Citizen participation goes beyond public information, since public information is typically limited to informing the public. The purpose of citizen participation is both to inform the public and to solicit public response on the public's needs, values, and evaluations of proposed solutions or actions. Since people cannot evaluate alternatives unless they have been adequately informed of the alternatives and their consequences, public information is always a central element in any citizen participation program. The ultimate measure of the effectiveness of citizen participation will be that the decisions are seen as responsive to the public.

Typically, a variety of techniques are used as part of the citizen participation process, such as: interviews, workshops, advisory groups, informational brochures, polling, and public meetings and hearings. Citizen participation programs may be designed to solicit public comment on a particular issue, such as locating a composting project, or eliminating a service. In these cases, the citizen participation program is normally not a single event,

but a series of coordinated activities that provide different kinds of participation opportunities at different stages of the decision-making process. Or, citizen participation may simply be a part of a continuing dialogue with the public, rather than related to any specific issue. In these cases, citizen participation is likely to include continuing activities such as meeting with public interest groups, or periodic meetings with institutional groups, to ensure continuing agency responsiveness on a number of issues of concern to the public.

The goals of citizen participation

An effective citizen participation program meets the following five goals:

- 1) **Information gathering:** Individuals and groups often possess important information which the decision makers need in order to make wise decisions. Examples of information gathering include receiving suggestions about the hours of use of a proposed recycling facility; the economic, social and environmental effects of proposed actions upon local planning or zoning; or long-range plans which affect future conditions within the community.
- 2) **Identifying public concerns and values:** If the decisions are to be responsive to the public, they must be based on a complete understanding of public preferences, concerns, and values. This goes beyond the factual information which the public can provide to the agency. Because various individuals, customer and interest groups have fundamentally different points of view, each will evaluate proposed actions from his own perspective. Citizen participation provides a mechanism by which the decision-makers can understand the problems, issues, and possible solutions from the perspectives of all the interested individuals or groups.
- 3) **Informing the public:** In order for the public to participate effectively, people must have complete and objective information about the nature of the problems and the alternatives being considered. Also, since some decisions can be complex and technical, there is often a need to provide information to the public about the agency, about how it operates, and the technical, regulatory, and economic constraints which affect it. A fine line must be observed, however, between providing the public with complete information, and attempting to persuade the public that the agency's viewpoint is correct. The public is extremely sensitive to anything which smacks of propaganda.
- 4) **Developing a consensus:** Some public decisions can be highly controversial. Various interests compete vigorously to be sure their interest and philosophy are heard. Often consensus must be formed on an issue-by-issue basis. Citizen participation can be an effective mechanism for achieving consensus on proposed actions, by providing an opportunity for dialogue between the various interests, and achieving agreements on those actions which would be acceptable to all the interests. While every citizen participation program strives to achieve a consensus, there are, of course, many occasions when this goal cannot be met. Consensus is generally defined as "100% acceptance but not necessarily 100% agreement." It is a point in time where the persons involved will buy off on the decision knowing what they know at that moment.
- 5) **Developing and maintaining credibility:** By creating an open and visible decision-making process to which all interests have equal access, citizen participation provides a means of making the decision-making process credible to groups with highly divergent viewpoints, even when they may disagree with the decision itself.

The functions

There are four basic functions that operate under the title "citizen participation".

- **Public information:** The process of providing information to the public to inform or soliciting information from the public to provide the catalyst for the various interests to respond to the agency. Tends to use the written word and other selective media techniques.
- **Public education:** An effort to establish a "smarter" set of publics by providing educational opportunities or information in a manner which promotes learning as opposed to just viewing. Tends to use "hands on" and participatory cause and effect techniques.
- **Public relations:** Traditionally, a series of events or activities that serve to enhance the image and understanding of the organization and promotes the value of their activities.
- **Public involvement:** A focused process that creates dialogue and promotes information flow inward to the organization from the interests that are represented. Usually by its nature, public involvement is a problem solving, consensus shaping, negotiation process. Uses many participatory techniques, innovative workshop designs and those approaches that are meaningful to those involved throughout the process.

Summary- principles

Most of the preceding can be summarized with the following thoughts:

1. Citizen participation is not a technique, but a strategy, approach or philosophy. There is no "one way" to do citizen participation. Avoid the technique-looking-for-application syndrome.

What works one place will not always work some place else. Anyway, it is not the technique as much as it is the people that are important.

2. Citizen participation is no substitute for the representative political process. In fact, it cannot be useful without complimenting that process. However, citizen participation will impact that political process.
3. No one citizen participation program can claim to have "represented" the people. No planner should allow a citizen participation program exclusive sovereignty over his interpretation of the public will. However, it can be used to show competing views.
4. Citizen participation is not a panacea. More conflict can be generated, new time allocations and resource commitment will be required. But remember, it is not the question, "how much will citizen participation cost?," but "can we do anything at all without it?" that is more relevant.
5. Think of the positive contributions of citizen participation: How can it supplement and improve other technical efforts? How will it make my decision better?
6. Once started, be honest. Citizen participation based on false assumptions and expectation of clever cooptation will be disastrous. Whether your efforts are honest can only be judged by you and your participants.
7. The goals of your citizen participation program and the roles of participants must be clearly defined.
8. Be prepared to accept and implement the ideas and solutions of participants. Just be clear on what types of decisions both you and participants in the citizen participation program should be making.

When is citizen participation needed?

Most efforts to define when citizen participation is needed deal with the “significance” of the decision, or the extent to which the decision is controversial. The difficulty is that “significance” is in the eye of the beholder. A more useful approach is to consider which decisions are “political” and which are “technical”.

A “political” decision (not party politics but policy) is one that arbitrarily grants benefits to some and assesses costs to others and is values based. Example: Deciding whether or not to build a dam as a flood control measure is political in nature, while identifying what type dam would work in that location is more technical.

A technical decision is usually one that is framed upon cause and effect relationships, based upon an accepted body of knowledge (such as engineering standards) usually found in a university and monitored by professional organizations. Another example might be whether or not to locate a compost pile facility on a particular site (political). However, the decision on whether that site qualifies legally (zoning wise, etc.) is technical.

People (the public) see decisions as political whenever different individuals or groups are impacted differently. And most people feel they can make those value choices just as well as the decision-maker can.

This is not to say that you should not make political decisions; you are required to do this every day, both economically and legally. But the more political a decision is, in the sense that different groups have a different resulting impact,

the more important it is that there be some process of consultation with those who **see themselves** as being impacted.

There are four general rules for determining when citizen participation is needed:

- 1) Citizen participation is needed when the organization needs positive public support of a proposed action or decision, such as a community-wide recycling program.
- 2) Citizen participation is needed when the public perceives that it has something to win or lose by the organization’s decision.
- 3) Citizen participation is needed when the results of a decision will significantly affect the interests — whether economic, social or political — of some people or groups more than others.
- 4) Citizen participation is needed when the decision to be made will significantly strengthen the position of one group or another already involved in controversy.

Several years ago, while working on a basin study for the Corps of Engineers, our firm was advising the Corps (as part of our consultant report) whether or not citizen participation should occur, and if so, on which of five streams designated in the study. As a result of that analysis, or rather, to achieve that analysis, we developed a set of questions to be asked of

certain key publics. The answers to those questions were displayed in a matrix to help us decide whether or not to have citizen participation and to what degree or level. Here is an example of that matrix, (Figure 1), and the type of questions that made up our analysis process. We placed comments, (if appropriate), in each of the smaller boxes.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Stream 1										
Stream 2										
Stream 3										
Stream 4										
Stream 5										

List of questions

1. What is the history of the project?
2. What is the awareness of information?
3. What is the existing agency image?
4. What is the policy impact?
5. Where are we at what decision-making level?
6. What other projects are like it?
7. Whether or not to have citizen participation?
8. What does our policy require?
9. Is it legally required?
10. What is the level of controversy?
11. What are the impacts of our technical solutions?
12. What is the technical feasibility?
13. What are the political implications?
14. Is it a cost sharing project?
15. What are the general impressions of this project/decision?
16. What does your intuition tell you?
17. What are the issues that effect the process?

These questions (and comments) when taken as a total, clearly indicate whether or not to have citizen participation. Only one question demands citizen participation - #9 *"Is it legally required?"* If the answer is yes, you have only to decide what level, type, and duration of involvement you will create/need.

In the San Diego area study there were many interesting responses by the field interview team. In answer to one question, *Should we have citizen participation?*, a city engineer from one of the towns replied, *"No way; Do not stir those uninformed people up. This requires only technical competence."* The Mayor of the same city said, *"Absolutely, we have just finished a neighborhood project and all the*

advisory groups are still in place. Go ahead." The city council said, *"Wait, because this will be cost sharing. Do not tell anybody until we see if we can fund our share. We do not want people coming up with alternatives we can not fund."* From each person's perspective, his answer/comment made sense, but gave us mixed messages with which to make our decision.

Obviously, as resources are limited, even with volunteerism, some form of analysis must assist you in deciding whether to have citizen participation or not. In this case, we did achieve direction when we "added up" all the comments.

Who is the public?

When we talk about citizen participation, we are really defining “the community” or “the public” as any individual, interest group, organization, or governmental agency other than the sponsor of the citizen participation effort. Yet, obviously, if you are designing a citizen participation program for a regional project, you cannot reasonably expect several million people to participate.

During the development of the Sea-Tac Communities Plan (the Seattle-Tacoma airport project), which was an ambitious citizen participation effort, approximately 3,000 people participated by attending meetings, completing a questionnaire, or participating in a task force. Many thousands more received newsletters or watched a television show which described the program, but participated in no other way. But of the 3,000 who did participate actively, only several hundred (at the most), saw the process from beginning to end. Yet, at the end of the process, the agencies involved and the community at large generally accepted that a consensus had been reached.

In another case, a smaller community, (at the initiation of a small group of activists) considered whether or not to establish a community-wide recycling program to be required for all home owners but voluntary to businesses and multiple housing facilities. A small advisory group of 12-15 people conducted the total citizen participation plan and then made a recommendation to the city. The program was adopted with some changes and yet only a minority of the community was active.

Clearly, the concept of “the public” needs some elaboration.

The concept of “publics”

The first principle in defining “the public” is to realize that “the public” does not exist except as an aggregate of many, many publics. “The public” does not exist any more than does the “average family” of 2.3 children. Though both concepts are useful, they do not reflect reality. (There are not many families with 2.3 children). In fact, most of us belong to a wide variety of “publics,” rather than a single public.

Some of the characteristics which may define us as members of particular “publics” could include: sex, race, type of employment, religious affiliation, political preference, the community in which we live, avocation/recreation interests, educational background, membership in professional or labor groups, support of a particular athletic team, etc. In other words, we all have a number of affiliations of varying degrees of importance. The degree to which we identify ourselves as a member of that public changes with circumstances and the emotional significance of that affiliation to us. The fact that someone lives in a particular neighborhood may have relatively low significance, for example, until it is discovered that the neighborhood might be impacted by noise, or the perceived “eyesore” from a waste disposal project.

Some “publics” may be relatively well-organized, (e.g., a political party, a professional association, or a social group); others are relatively unorganized and become noticeable only when they are strongly affected by a particular issue.

As a result, it is far more feasible to talk in terms of “publics” rather than “the public,” to remind ourselves that we are in fact dealing with many interests and groups, rather than a single monolithic body.

The concept of “the vocal minority/the silent majority”

It is a common complaint that too many decisions are made by “the vocal minority,” since it is an observable phenomenon that most political decisions are made by a minority of actively involved and interested citizens. In recent years, it has been argued that the wishes of “the silent majority” could justify going against the demands of the active minority. Thus, a politician, an agency, or an interest group may claim, “If we could just hear from the ‘silent majority’ — then it would be clear that our policies have the support of the people.” This is a rather circular argument, of course, because as long as people remain silent, no one can contradict the claim; and anyone who speaks up is no longer a member of the “silent majority.” In fact, “the silent majority” is another mythical beast which rests on the assumption that, somehow, because people are silent, they are totally in agreement. In reality, it is far safer to assume that the silent majority contains just as many diverse opinions as does the active minority; but the silent majority has chosen not to participate, either because they do not see the issue as having much impact on them, or they do not believe that they can affect the outcome.

It should also be remembered that the “silent majority” is not a fixed class of people. All of us make choices about when to participate. So we may choose to be part of the vocal minority on one issue and to be a member of the silent majority on several others. In other words, the membership of the vocal minority and the silent majority are constantly changing. When we say that we have a “controversial” issue, all we are saying is that the vocal minority is relatively large for this particular issue.

There has been considerable research on the reasons that people choose not to participate, and the four reasons most often cited in the research are as follows:

1. **They feel adequately represented in the active minority.** Leaders of visible interest groups often serve as “surrogates” for a much larger group of people who feel represented by the activities of that interest group. Most of us belong to some group in which we do little more than send our annual dues in order that that group will represent our particular interests. A case in point might be a neighborhood association. Residents of a neighborhood near a project may not participate because they feel represented by the neighborhood association. Because of this “surrogate” role, special interest groups are an integral and necessary part of an effective operating democracy.
2. **People are unaware that they have a stake in a particular decision.** We all choose to involve ourselves on those issues which we see as having a major impact on our personal lives. We also make choices between those issues which we see as having relatively major impacts and those whose impacts are relatively minor. We may be so busy earning a living, for example, that a basin or hydropower study, transportation system or a public land master plan may seem very abstract and unrelated to our lives. But a local recycling project may get our interest. In effect, every citizen has the right to choose whether or not to participate.
3. **People do not believe they can influence the decision.** If people do not believe their participation will make a difference, they will not participate.

One of the major responsibilities in a community involvement program is to make clear how people can influence a decision, showing clear connections between the public's participation and the outcome.

4. **Informed, but low priority.** Some folks are well informed on all aspects of your study, project, etc., but contrary to your opinion, they do not see the importance of it in their lives compared to other issues. So, they ignore your activities.

In summary, citizen participation programs deal primarily with a relatively small number of highly motivated and affected citizens and groups. It is important to have public information efforts so that a much broader public is aware that the project/study, etc., is taking place and is also aware of the opportunity to participate.

Because citizen participation programs so inevitably deal primarily with the minority, there are certain obligations that every community involvement program has to the broader majority.

These include:

1. Inform as broad a segment of the public as possible of the stake they may have in the issue under study, (e.g., hours of operation, or daytime garbage truck traffic to the new complex.)
2. Clearly inform the public how they can participate in the issue/decision and how their participation will influence the outcome.
3. Systematically target "publics" in the community involvement program to ensure that the active minority is representative — in terms of values and interests— of the broader majority.

Targeting the publics

"The publics" vary from issue to issue, study to study. A neighborhood group which is very interested in environmental issues may be very disinterested with your "Unified Work Program." Therefore, as noted in "Designing a citizen participation program" on p. 16, one of the steps in designing an effective program is to systematically identify the "publics" who are most likely to see themselves as affected at each step of the planning or decision-making process. One of the difficulties is that the degree to which people feel affected by a particular decision is a result of their subjective perception. One individual may feel severely impacted by project activity at the same time that his neighbor does not. The starting point for any process is an effort to objectively analyze the likelihood that someone will feel affected by the study or decision. As an example, if we had a recycling project, some of the bases on which people are most likely to feel effected are:

1. **Proximity:** People who live in the immediate vicinity of the collection area and are likely to be affected by noise, vibrations, odors, traffic congestion, property value impacts, or possible threat of dislocation, are the most obvious "publics" to be included in the process. The more directly people experience these impacts, the less likely they are willing to be represented by a group — such as neighborhood association — and the more likely they are to want to participate personally.
2. **Economic:** Groups that have economic advantages or jobs at stake (e.g., trucking companies, sanitary fill operators and people employed at the complex) are again an obvious starting point in any analysis of possible "publics."

3. **Use:** Those people who use the complex are also potential “publics” who may wish to participate in the citizen participation program. One difficulty in citizen participation programs — for which there is no easy solution — is determining who represents the user of the complex, facility or program.
4. **Social:** Recycling can have a direct effect in changing the character of the neighborhood immediately surrounding the complex. People who see collection facilities as a threat to the social and environmental conditions of the local neighborhoods may be interested in planning efforts surrounding this complex and other future sites.
5. **Values:** Some groups may only be indirectly affected by the first four criteria, but believe that the issues raised in a study directly affect their values, their “sense of the way things should be.” Any time a study touches on such issues as free enterprise vs. government control, or jobs vs. environmental enhancement, there will be a number of individuals who will participate primarily because of these issues of values. Others will participate whenever tax dollars are at stake.

While the above categories may already begin to suggest “publics” you would want to include in a citizen participation program, there are a number of other specific resources you may want to tap in targeting the public. These include:

1. **Self-identification:** Stories about the study in the newspaper, on radio or TV, the distribution of brochures and newsletters, and well publicized public meetings are all means of encouraging self-identification. Anyone who participates by attending the meeting or writing a letter or phoning for information has clearly indicated an interest in being an active public in the process. Brochures and reports should contain some sort of response form so that people can indicate an interest in participating. This will help you build a list of participants.
2. **Third party identification:** One of the best ways to obtain information about other interests or individuals who should be included in the study is to ask representatives of known interests for their suggestions. You might, for example, conduct interviews with neighborhood group representatives, inquiring who else they believe should be consulted. Also, all response forms attached to reports, brochures, or newsletters should request suggestions of other groups or individuals who might be interested in the study.
3. **Staff identification:** If you are project manager, you will undoubtedly find that your staff is aware of individuals or groups who have concerns about project issues. This may be due to participation in past studies, complaints received on environmental issues, or personal contacts in the local communities. As a result, one of the richest sources of information about possible individuals or groups who may be interested in participating will be your own internal staff.
4. **List of groups of individuals:** There are numerous lists available which could assist in targeting the “publics.” These lists include:
 - Yellow pages
 - Chamber of Commerce lists
 - Lists of associations or neighborhood groups
 - City and county directories
 - Direct mailing lists of groups of various types, (these must be purchased)
 - Lists maintained by sociology/ political science departments

5. **Historical records:** There may be considerable information in your own files. These include:
 - General complaints
 - Lists of previous participants in earlier studies
 - Correspondence files
 - Library files on past projects
6. **Newspaper library:** A review of newspaper clippings may reveal names of individuals or groups who have participated in waste management or recycling projects or studies previously, or who have expressed opinions about your area of concern.
7. **Consultation with other agencies:** Staff of a number of agencies may have information about "publics" interested in other issues. These might include: City and county planning and zoning commissions, the Department of Natural Resources, etc. In addition, many other agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and the U.S. Department of Transportation are currently conducting community involvement or citizen participation efforts and, as a result, may be in touch with influential community leaders who might also be included in your studies, projects, or programs.
8. **User survey:** One possible citizen participation technique is to conduct a survey of users of your facilities. If this survey is conducted near the beginning of a citizen participation program, it can also be used to identify individuals or groups who would like to participate in the study.

Identifying "publics" at each stage of planning

The same "publics" are not necessarily involved in each stage of planning.

Some stages of planning require public review from the broadest range of "publics" possible. Other stages require a degree of continuity in understanding the technical data base which tends to limit participation to a "leadership" group. This "leadership" could consist of individuals who are knowledgeable in the field and have defined leadership roles in environmental, business, or civic groups. Some people are seen as leaders because they are advocates for a particular position, while others are seen as leaders precisely because they are viewed as "objective" or "reasonable".

There should be no attempt to exclude broader "publics" during those planning stages which require continuity and an understanding of the technical data; however, the citizen participation techniques used during those stages are likely to be aimed at smaller numbers of people. For example, when continuity is needed an advisory group may be a particularly useful technique. When there is a need for broad public evaluation of alternatives, then public meetings, newsletters, workshops, etc., may be more useful techniques.

In thinking through which "publics" need to be involved at specific stages of the decision process, it may be useful to identify the different levels of "publics" such as:

1. Staff of other federal, state and local governmental agencies.
2. Elected officials at various levels of government.
3. Highly visible leaders of organized groups or identifiable interests (e.g., associations, neighborhood groups, advisory committees, etc.).

4. Membership of organized groups or identifiable interests.
5. "General" public, not identified with organized groups.
6. Business community (both entrepreneurial, small business and corporate)

At different stages of the planning or decision-making process, all six groups may need to be involved; at other stages only a few of these levels will be targeted. To avoid the dangers of producing an "elitist" citizen participation program, any planning stage during which you have worked primarily with the "leadership publics" should be followed by a more general review by broader "publics" This provides for both visibility and political acceptability.

By "targeting" the various "publics" at each stage of the decision-making process, you are then in a position to select appropriate citizen participation techniques for each of these particular "publics."

Some of the issues to be considered in identifying which publics should be targeted for each stage are:

1. **Which publics are capable of providing you with the information you need at this stage?** If the information you need is general and values reactions, then you may want to aim for the broadest range of publics. If the information you need is relatively specific or technical, then you may wish to seek out a leadership group.
2. **Which publics will be able to understand the information you will be providing at this stage?** If you are expecting the public to absorb highly detailed and complex information, then you may need to give additional time to review it. If you have organized the materials into a "digestible" form, then you may be able to draw on the participation of a wider, more general, public.

3. **How much time will be involved in participating?** Typically, only the "leadership" publics are able to make any extensive time commitment.
4. **How much continuity is required?** If the participation at this planning stage requires some form of continuing participation, (e.g., attending a series of meetings), then participation is typically limited to leadership publics.
5. **Whose participation is required either for "visibility" or "political acceptability?"** Again, the notion that at some stages of a review you may be dealing primarily with leadership publics is not intended to be exclusionary, but rather a realistic expectation of the level of participation you can expect even though broader publics are invited to participate.

Or, to put it another way, you may be limited to "leadership" publics when developing a product such as sets of alternatives but, both for visibility and political acceptability, that product must be reviewed by a broader public.

Subsection II

Designing a citizen participation program

A citizen participation program is usually not a single event, such as a public hearing, but a series of coordinated activities that provide different kinds of participation opportunities at different stages of a decision-making process. This section describes numerous citizen participation techniques which can be combined in a variety of ways to meet the needs of a particular situation. The challenge is to pick techniques which work for your unique "publics" and question.

One lesson which has been learned about citizen participation is that there is no single citizen participation program design which can be prescribed for all circumstances. A program that has been very successful in one situation may be ineffective in another.



This subsection provides guidance in the form of general principles and a "thought process" that helps approach the design of citizen participation programs in a logical manner. But beyond this general approach there are always conditions surrounding each decision that can also influence the selection of techniques. The last portion of this subsection identifies those conditions that influence the selection of techniques.

General principles of participation

Practical experience with citizen participation has led to three general observations about how the public participates in citizen participation programs.

1. **Different publics will be involved at different stages of the decision-making process.** Participation in a citizen participation program — unless it lasts only a short time — is not static. Rather, the number and kinds of people involved will expand and contract throughout the decision-making process. During technical phases, participation is likely to be limited to leaders of groups or staffs of agencies. When alternatives are being reviewed, a more general public will be involved.
2. **There are appropriate levels of participation at each step in the decision-making process.** It is possible to attempt too much citizen participation at a particular step in the decision-making process, just as it is possible to provide too little. Too high a level of public interest at the beginning of a study may lead to dampened enthusiasm when the process drags out for several years. Citizen participation programs need to balance early participation and

continuing interest in a problem, with opportunities for involvement of a broader public at those points when their participation will be most effective. On the other hand, offering limited opportunities for participation when feelings are very strong can lead to charges of “cover-up,” lack of openness, and unwillingness to listen to the public. The thought process described in this subsection will help in identifying the appropriate level of participation at each step in the decision-making process.

- 3. Citizen participation will increase as the decision-making process progresses.** As a decision comes closer and closer, more people — both inside and outside the organization — will become aware that they have an interest in the outcome of the decision. The organized interests are more likely to participate in the early stages of the decision-making process, while the less organized publics will participate more effectively in the later stages. The increased participation is a mixed blessing. It is encouraging to see more people participating, but it is frustrating to discover that most people assume that the program started the first day they participated and feel a need to re-examine all the assumptions, alternatives, and decisions that have been made over months. As a result, it is very important to document all stages of citizen participation, so it is clear what decisions have been made at each stage, and who participated in making those decisions.

The citizen participation thought process

Citizen participation techniques should not be selected on a whim. In the simplest terms, one’s planning must answer exactly what is to be accomplished, with whom, when, and then — only then — how.

These questions translate into **six basic steps in the thought process for designing citizen participation programs:**

1. Identify the decision-making process.
2. Identify the citizen participation objectives for each stage in the decision making process.
3. Identify the information exchange needed to complete each stage in the decision-making process.
4. Identify the publics with whom information must be exchanged.
5. Identify any special circumstances surrounding the issue and the publics that could affect selection of citizen participation techniques.
6. Identify the appropriate techniques — and their sequence — to accomplish the required information exchange.

Using a worksheet to design your plan

Many times, a citizen participation plan design can be reduced in complexity by using common sense and deliberately deciding how much citizen participation is appropriate for the particular situation. Once you have decided the level of involvement, you can use the "Thought Process" as a simple design tool. This series of worksheets, completed for each stage, provides an excellent outline to be "fleshed" out later, after you have put the plan together in general. Below is a typical worksheet. If you had ten steps to your plan/program/project process, you would use ten of these.

<p>Title (Title or name of this planning or decision-making stage)</p>	<p>Product or planning outcome (Product or planning outcome of this stage (tangible result))</p>
<p>Information to: (What information do we need to give TO THE PUBLIC at this stage?)</p>	<p>Information from: (What information do we need to get FROM THE PUBLIC at this stage?)</p>
<p>Who are the publics? Levels? (What are the publics at this stage? What levels? What function?)</p>	
<p>Techniques - sequence/timing? cost? (What technique(s) do we use at this stage, with which publics, to give or get information, in what sequence and at what cost?)</p>	

Since each stage has a different product or outcome, each worksheet is developed on its own but, cumulatively, the total becomes your citizen participation plan. Be sure to estimate costs at each stage, because later, if there are budget adjustments needed, those individuals responsible for trimming the budget have a good picture of what they are deleting, rather than just a "lump sum" reduction.

We have provided a complete model of the worksheet on the next page so you may copy it for future use. This sheet can be drawn on a flipchart page(s) and can become an excellent "tool" for a team to start the design of their citizen participation effort.

<p>Title</p>	<p>Product or planning outcome</p>
<p>Information Exchange</p>	
<p>Information <u>to</u> the public</p>	<p>Information <u>from</u> the public</p>
<p>Who are the publics? Levels?</p>	
<p>How to reach them: Techniques, sequence/timing? Cost?</p>	

Designing meetings, workshops and small group approaches

Throughout the decade, public meetings of one sort or another, have been a staple of citizen participation. However, there has been a dramatic shift from the early 1970s when the public hearing was the central fixture in the citizen participation plan.

This shift away from the formal public hearing or meeting has given an increased interest in workshops and small group processes and other similar formats.

The term "meeting format" refers to a number of meeting elements including meeting type (e.g., hearing or workshop), meeting size, meeting agenda, room arrangements, and leadership style. In this section we will be discussing the major issues that should be considered in selecting a meeting format.

Format follows function

The guiding principle of meeting design is that "format follows function," meaning that the design of the meeting should reflect the purpose of the meeting. The single most important thing to consider in designing a meeting is: **What do you wish to accomplish by holding the meeting?** There are five basic functions which meetings serve. These functions may each be fulfilled in a separate meeting or several functions may be fulfilled in a single meeting. The five basic functions are:

1. Information giving:

In this instance you are communicating information to the public. This information could include the nature of the study, the issues which have been identified, the available alternatives or the plan selected by the organization. You possess the information and must communicate it in some manner to the public.



2. **Information receiving:**
In this case, the public possesses the information. The information could include public perceptions of needs, problems, values, impacts, or reactions to alternatives. This function stresses the need to acquire information held by the public.
3. **Interaction:**
While interaction clearly involves both information-giving and information-receiving, it also serves the additional purpose of allowing people to share their ideas with the organization and/or other publics. Publics may possibly come to modify their viewpoint as a result of the interaction.
4. **Consensus-forming/negotiation:**
A step beyond interaction is to begin to move toward common agreements. Interaction alone may not assure any form of agreement, but in consensus-forming/negotiation the interaction is directed toward agreement on a single plan by all of the critical publics.
5. **Summarizing:**
This is the need at the end of a long process to publicly acknowledge the agreements that have been reached and reiterate the positions of the different groups toward these agreements. This function is required both to give visibility to the entire decision-making process which has taken place, and also to form a kind of closure to the process that is ending.

Each of these functions in turn establishes limits on the kind of meeting format. A few of these limits and implications are:

Information giving: Since the information giving function means that information must flow from your organization to all various publics, then it is appropriate to have a meeting format which primarily allows for presentations

by you with questions or responses related to clarification of that information or requests for additional information. This means that the classic meeting with one person at the front of the room making a presentation to an audience — which is a suitable and efficient method for communicating information—may be a suitable format for this function. An open house might be another example.

Information receiving: When the function is reversed and the need is to obtain information from the public, then having one person stand up at the front of the room addressing an entire audience is an extremely inefficient means of obtaining information. In this case the function would require that opportunities be provided for the maximum number of people to provide information to you. This criteria is not met when only one person can speak at a time addressing the entire audience. As a result there may be a need to consider breaking the audience into smaller groups so that comments may be collected on flip charts or using other techniques in which each participant can provide information at the same time. To serve this function, providing opportunities for discussion or interaction is only necessary if needed to generate new information.

Interaction: Interaction, by its very nature requires that an audience be broken down into groups small enough to allow time and opportunity for individuals to exchange information and ideas and to discuss them all thoroughly. This usually means either that meetings are limited in size, (such as coffee klatch or advisory committee meeting), or that any larger meeting is broken down into small groups during the period in which this function is being met. There is no way that a large public meeting will provide anything more than minimal opportunities for interaction.

Consensus forming/negotiation:

Like interaction, consensus forming/negotiation also requires intense interaction and therefore must be accomplished in some form of small group. In addition, the requirement for consensus formation usually means that some procedure is used which assists the group in working toward a single agreed-upon plan rather than allowing for simply an open discussion with no specific product.

Summarizing: Since the function of summarizing is to provide visibility to the entire process which has taken place, it may again be suitable to use large public meetings as a means to serve the summarizing function. In this way, individuals and groups can be seen taking positions and describing their involvement in the planning process which has preceded this meeting. This does not, however, automatically mean that a large public meeting is the only forum to serve this function, as there are many creative and less formal means by which a visible summary may occur without the legalistic procedures of a formal hearing.

Workshop — a definition

The term “workshop” is used for a wide variety of small meetings, including small informal discussions, training sessions, and highly structured activities, such as participating in simulation games. For the purposes of this guide we will be concentrating on workshops which: 1) are working sessions rather than simply discussions, and 2) have a specific product in mind which is the objective of the participants to complete.

Examples of products which might be produced in workshops include:

- Lists of problems perceived by the public that should be addressed by a study. Work groups could set priorities on these listed items.
- Broad conceptual alternatives which are seen by the public as possible ways to solve and identify problems.
- Evaluation of a set of alternatives.
- Lists of the critical impacts to be analyzed as part of the environmental and social impact analysis.
- A single agreed-upon plan resulting from negotiations and evaluation of a range of alternatives.

Duration of a workshop:

Workshops can be run during a three-hour evening meeting or, on other occasions, may run for six to eight hours during the day. The most intense form of workshop is the charrette which may run for many hours. Any workshop, so long it cannot be held in evening hours, runs greater risk of being perceived as non-representative and limited to an elite group, since longer workshops immediately create problems of obtaining babysitters or getting off work for the period of time involved in the workshop.

Typical workshop structure:

The typical workshop structure consists of three basic phases:

Orientation: During the orientation period, describe the purposes and structure of the workshop, and provide the participants with sufficient information to complete the group activity which is to follow. This phase is usually as brief and succinct as possible.

Group activity: This is the actual work period of the workshop during which the participants are broken into small groups to perform an assignment or participate in a simulation game or some other structured activity which will result in the desired product. The use of flip charts and selection of spokespersons and recorders by teams is a frequently used technique in conducting workshops.

Group discussion: Once the group activity has been completed and a product has been produced (although frequently in a raw, non-digested form), a period follows during which the group can discuss the product it has produced, evaluate it, and possibly place some priority on which items they consider to be most important.

Steps in designing a workshop:

The following steps are useful in designing a workshop:

1. **Identify the desired product:** In this step you identify precisely what the product is that should result from the workshop, such as a set of alternatives, a ranking of alternatives, or a list of impacts which should be evaluated as part of the environmental and social impact analysis.
2. **Identify the resource information the public will need:** If citizens are to help you in developing or evaluating alternatives, or in identifying impacts, there is certain basic information they will need in order to give you their responses. This information should be prepared in a simple, understandable format. Write it in layman's language. Providing good information saves workshop time that would otherwise be spent by the participants in locating the information that they need. Frequently this material is included in a small workbook which also contains team assignments, exercise instructions, and other background material on the study. Careful preparation of the resource material is one of the most important tasks in workshop design prior to conducting the workshop itself. If this material is presented in confusing, complex, or over-detailed form, the workshop will be less productive.
3. **Select or design a series of activities which will result in the desired product:** In some cases there may be previously used workshop formats which will result in the desired product. If not, it will be necessary for you to design a set of activities which will meet your needs. The usual technique is to write simple clear instructions for group activities and give the groups substantial responsibility, both in how the activity is completed and how the product is produced.
4. **Design simple mechanisms for evaluating the workshop product:** Once participants have worked together to develop long lists of possible problems or alternative solutions or probable impacts, there is a final need for participants to evaluate their products and rank them in order of priority. Without an opportunity to evaluate, participants may feel restricted by the workshop format or feel that all the points in the workshop are receiving equal value regardless of relative merit. This evaluation could include completion of a written response form, ranking items in a priority list, using a straw vote, or a weighted voting system based on the highest priorities (as is used in the nominal group process). Without some opportunities for evaluation, citizens are likely to feel their work is incomplete. They may also worry that if all the evaluation is left to the discretion of your staff, some of their deepest concerns and priorities may not receive the same value as workshop participants would have assigned to them.

The use of citizen participation techniques other than meetings

While far and away the most commonly used citizen participation technique, meetings are frequently a very inappropriate and costly method to achieve your particular citizen participation goal. To be effective, your choice of techniques requires some thoughtful analysis. This analysis process can be quite simple and requires only a few logical steps:

1. What is the **purpose** you wish to accomplish? (The more specificity here the easier the choices.)
2. Who might be able to deliver those objectives? (Remember there needs to be information **to** and **from** the publics.)
3. What would be a common technique or techniques those publics use?
4. Is there some combination of techniques that could effectively overlap and still produce the objectives?
5. If you are not sure about "their" habits or techniques, **ASK!**

The summary of these five steps is stated as:

"ACTIVITY SERVES PURPOSE."

Please keep in mind that deciding ahead of time "we can't afford it" is an attitude that limits options that may really be possible. We are constantly amazed at the contributions, work and efforts people offer when they are included in the process.

The point of this preface to the catalogue of techniques (on the following pages) is really quite basic, yet frequently overlooked, **there are many alternative ways to functionally deal with the public other than meetings.**

In an original definition of citizen participation, we stated that citizen participation is a management strategy attitude that contains four major functions:

1. Public information
2. Public education
3. Public relations
4. Public involvement

These functions ebb and flow along the planning or decision-making process, depending on the goals, objectives and purpose specific to each particular stage. Since the functions are obviously different, the techniques for them are greatly influenced by what you want to accomplish at any particular stage. For example, having a block party would do little to help you gather information on public needs and priorities in an early problem identification stage.

While this concept seems simple enough, we are always amazed when a group immediately decides to "hold a meeting" before any analysis is attempted. From a cost standpoint, sometimes a well placed notice or advertisement will yield a larger ROI (return on investment) than a series of/or a single workshop and its associated high overhead costs. From a practical standpoint, a few well chosen techniques can accomplish your purposes and yet keep your citizen participation costs at a minimum.

A short catalogue of citizen participation techniques

There are already a large number of citizen participation techniques available. And because citizen participation is a relatively new field, many new techniques are constantly being developed.

This section contains a short catalogue of 16 frequently used citizen participation techniques. A short description is provided for each technique, plus a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages. An index of the techniques is provided below:

- Interviews
- Field offices
- Hotline
- Displays and exhibits
- Newspaper inserts
- Reports, brochures and information bulletins
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Participatory television
- Cumulative brochure
- Contest or event
- Mediation
- Charrette
- Delphi
- Simulation games
- Technical assistance to citizens
- Training programs for citizens

Reprinted from: IWR Training Program, Creighton, et al, "Advanced Course: Citizen Participation in Water Resources Planning," U.S. Army Engineers

Institute for Water Resources, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, 1977.

Interviews:

Description of the Technique:

One technique for quickly assessing public sentiment is to conduct a series of interviews with key individuals representing the range of publics most likely to be interested or affected by the decision or project. The kinds of information which might be discussed in an interview would include the amount of interest in the topic, the goals and values of the interest group the individual represents, the manner in which the interest group would like to participate in the decision or project, political climate, and relationship between the various interest groups. Interviews can be nonstructured and fairly fluid. Or the interviewer can prepare a list of questions or topics to be discussed in each interview, so that responses can be easily compared and summarized. Since there are skills involved in effective interviewing, interviews should be conducted by somebody with experience or training in interviewing.

Advantages of interviews:

- Interviews can provide a quick picture of the political situation in which a decision will be made.
- Interviews can provide important information about how various interests wish to participate.
- Personal relationships can be built with key individuals and more direct communication links established with the publics. Once communication has been established through an interview, individuals and groups are more likely to participate.
- Interviews build credibility — listening to others begins the trust process.

Disadvantages:

- Poor interviewing can create a negative impression of the individual, and, therefore process and your organization.
- Interviews may not be entirely representative of public sentiment.
- Interviews require large investment of time to conduct and summarize results.

Field Offices

Description of the technique:

Field offices are local offices of the sponsoring organization established in the community where problems or impacts are occurring. Typically, a field office is placed in a highly visible part of the community—such as a downtown storefront or shopping center—so that the largest number of people will know of its existence. The field office's staff are able to answer questions. They sometimes solve minor problems or misunderstandings, and they solicit opinions from the local community. A field office is designed to encourage "drop-ins" and other informal interactions with the community, with exhibits, charts, maps, brochures and other materials on display. Field office staff are encouraged to be involved as much as possible in the local community. Field offices can also be the meeting place for workshops, task force meetings, open houses or other events. This reinforces the field office as the focal point for participation in the process.

Advantages of field offices:

- Field offices provide a means of informal interaction with the local community at the convenience of the residents.
- Field offices communicate the value the organization places upon community feelings.

Disadvantages of field offices:

- Field offices can be costly to staff and operate.
- Field office staff often experience torn loyalties between their commitments to the sponsoring organization and the concerns of the local public.

Hotline

Description of the technique:

A hotline is an "easy to remember" telephone number which is publicized through repetition in brochures, reports, news stories, paid advertising, etc., as a single telephone number that citizens can call to ask questions or make comments about pertinent issues. If the public which you wish to reach is large geographically, the hotline is usually toll free. The hotline is staffed by people who will take responsibility for finding answers to questions from the public, or for relaying comments or complaints from the public to appropriate staff persons. Hotlines have been used as a method of handling public complaints, and as coordination points for individuals requiring information about the progress of a study. Comments received over a hotline can be incorporated as part of the record of a public meeting or hearing.

The communication skills of the staff operating the hotline are very important, as defensive or insensitive responses to public comment may produce negative effects.

Advantages of the hotline:

- The hotline provides a convenient means by which citizens can participate in the study.
- The hotline assists citizens in locating the staff most likely to be able to answer their questions or receive their comments.
- The hotline may be a useful means of providing information about meetings or other citizen participation activities.
- Having a hotline communicates your interest in public comments or questions.

Disadvantages of the hotline:

- Defensive or insensitive comments may produce a negative reaction from the public.
- The hotline must be staffed by people able and willing to deal with public comment effectively.
- A hotline does not allow for face to face contact.

Displays and exhibits:

Description of the technique:

This technique can be used to inform the broad public of citizen participation programs, or to obtain comments from the public. It involves setting up displays or exhibits in public places such as shopping centers or fairs where there are lots of people passing by. These displays range from fixed, which provide general information to the public, to booths which are staffed by citizen participation specialists who are able to answer questions from the public, or solicit public comment. Even when fixed displays are used, a response form can be available so the public can respond to the display. Displays and exhibits may be particularly useful in identifying publics that had not been previously identified as interested. They can also provide general information to the public about problems, even if people choose not to participate. Exhibits or displays should be coordinated with other citizen participation activities, so that people displaying an interest as a result of an exhibit can be directed into other citizen participation activities.

Advantages of exhibits or displays:

- Provide information to the general public about issues.
- Help identify individuals and groups with an interest in an area, problem, or resource issue.

Disadvantages of displays or exhibits:

- If exhibits or booths are staffed, they involve a major commitment of staff time.
- Displays and exhibits must be coordinated with other citizen participation techniques so that interest developed through the exhibit can be directed into other citizen participation activities.

Newspaper inserts:

Description of the technique:

One technique which has been used to provide information to the broad general public and, at the same time solicit comment back from the public, is a local newspaper insert including a response form. Most newspapers are able to handle the distribution of inserts for a modest cost, and are often able to print the insert at considerably less cost than other commercial printers. The newspaper insert can describe the study or decision-making process and the various means by which the public can be involved, and can also include a response form which will allow people to express opinions or indicate their willingness to be involved in other citizen participation techniques.

Most urban newspapers are able to distribute inserts to selected geographical areas, rather than their entire readership, so that it is possible to target the insert at those areas which will have the highest interest in the decision or project. On a percentage or total quantity basis, it may provide a means of participation for the largest number of citizens compared with other citizen participation techniques. Because respondents are self-selecting, a statistical bias is introduced into the responses and they cannot be represented as statistically valid like a survey.

Advantage of newspaper inserts:

- Newspaper inserts reach a much greater percentage of the population than most other public information techniques.
- Newspaper insert response forms provide a means for identifying other individuals and groups interested in participating in citizen participation activities.

Disadvantage of newspaper inserts:

- Newspaper inserts are relatively expensive to produce and distribute in large numbers.
- The response rate from newspaper inserts is relatively low, and it cannot be represented as statistically valid.

Reports, brochures and information bulletins:

Description of the technique:

Reports, brochures and information bulletins are an essential part of every citizen participation effort. They are used to inform the public of opportunities for participation, progress on the project to date, and any decisions that have been made.

There are three times at which reports are typically published in a citizen participation program. These include:

1. After problem definition, including initial data collection.
2. Upon identification of a set of broad general alternatives.
3. Upon identification of specific detailed alternatives and their environmental impacts.

Because reports contain technical information, one key requirement is to write reports in a manner which provides needed technical information, yet is understandable to the general public. It is sometimes useful to have reports reviewed by an advisory committee who can point out confusing, biased, or unnecessary material in the report.

Brochures are usually brief, (up to 16 pages), and contain a description of the study, the issues involved in the study, and a summary of the opportunities for the public to participate in the study. Typically, brochures are used to reach new publics or inform known publics of the initiation of the study. The usefulness of a brochure is almost entirely dependent on its visual attractiveness and the skill with which it is written.

Information bulletins or newsletters are periodic reports to the public to maintain continuing public interest in the project and to document progress in a highly visible manner. Information bulletins or newsletters are particularly important during portions of the study which are relatively technical in nature.

During these periods, the general public is less likely to be involved, but should be kept informed of what is occurring. The value of an information bulletin or newsletter rests almost entirely upon its ability to stir interest and encourage interaction. A drab, boring, bureaucratic sounding newsletter will usually not be worth the effort.

Some suggestions for all publications are shown below:

- Strive for simplicity.
- Use the public's language.
- Make the message relevant to the reader.
- Use graphics and avoid overly bureaucratic layouts.
- Don't make commitments that cannot be fulfilled.
- Provide clear instructions for how the public can interact with you.

Advantages of publications:

- Publications are a direct means of providing a substantial amount of information to a large number of people in a relatively economical manner.
- Publications are able to communicate a greater amount of information than almost any other form of communication.
- Publications serve as a permanent record of what has transpired in the citizen participation program.

Disadvantages of publications:

- Preparation of attractive publications requires definite skills which are not available in all organizations, so may have to be purchased outside the organization.
- Because of cost factors, publications still reach only a limited audience and cannot be considered the only means by which to inform and involve the general public.
- Newsletters are time consuming.
- Newsletters inform only.

Conducting surveys:

Description of the technique:

Surveys are an effort to determine public attitudes, values, and perceptions on various issues. They employ rigorous methods to ensure that the findings of the survey in fact represent the sentiment of the community being sampled. Surveys can be conducted by phone, by mail, by individual interviews, or in small group interviews. Firms that design surveys spend many hours and use complex procedures to ensure that the survey does not contain bias and that the "sample" of people interviewed is representative. As a result, surveys must be designed and conducted by somebody who is experienced in survey design. Normally this means that someone outside the planning organization must be retained to design and conduct the survey.

The steps you would need to follow in conducting a survey are:

1. Determine specifically what it is your organization wants to find out.
2. Determine how the information would be used once it is obtained, so that you know the results are related to your planning or decision-making process.
3. Find out if other organizations already collect the information that would answer your questions.
4. Unless you have an experienced survey person in your own organization, contact a reputable survey researcher.

Advantages of a survey:

- Surveys can provide an expression of feeling from the total public, not just those publics which are most directly affected.
- Surveys can provide an indication of whether or not the active participants in your citizen participation program are in fact representative of the broader public.

Disadvantages of the survey:

- Unless surveys are carefully designed, they do not produce reliable and meaningful data.
- The cost of developing statistically reliable surveys is high.
- Surveys cannot be substituted for political negotiation between significant interests.
- If the issue is not of broad public interest, then a substantial number of survey respondents will be uninformed about the issues covered by the survey. (If you need to know that people are poorly informed, then this can itself be important information).

Participatory television:

Description of the technique:

Because of the number of people reached by television, it holds considerable potential as a tool for both informing the public and soliciting participation. Some experts see cable television as holding the answer to citizen participation, since cable television eventually may allow for two-way communication. In the meantime, there have been several major uses of television in citizen participation. These include:

1. Preparation of a half-hour or a one-hour television program describing alternative courses of action in a major study. Participants are asked to express their preference by mail or by a ballot that has been distributed in advance of the television program. In some cases, discussion groups have been organized so that people watch and discuss the television program as a group and then mark the ballots.
2. The organization could also obtain a block of time and conduct a call-in show on issues. One planning agency conducted a television program much like a telethon, with banks of telephone operators who received calls from the public and referred them to a panel of elected officials.
3. Another organization obtained a regular block of free time from the local channel, and used it as a forum for a continuing discussion in the citizen participation program. The television program served as a channel of communication about upcoming events, and also provided a forum for people to come on the show and present different viewpoints.

Although television reaches large numbers of people, it is unusual to be able to obtain enough time on a commercial station for a participatory television program, although this has been accomplished in a few cases where the study was extremely controversial. The audience on educational, university or cable television is much smaller and something of an educational, social and economic elite. This creates problems of representation. Any poll which is taken accompanying such a program would share these problems of representation.

Advantages of participatory television:

- Participatory television reaches the largest audience of any community involvement technique.
- This technique is most convenient for the participants, because they do not have to leave their own home.
- Even if people do not participate by filling out a ballot or phoning in, there is a definite education function to participatory television.

Disadvantages of participatory television:

- The audience viewing the program may not be representative, and any votes or tallies taken as a result of the program may also be unrepresentative.
- Unless some participation occurs in designing the program, the public may not feel that the your organization accurately or objectively described the issues.
- This kind of participation gives equal value to somebody who lives immediately near a problem as to somebody who lives 50 miles away and is only peripherally affected.
- Many people are not skilled in presenting information on TV.

Cumulative brochure:

Description of the technique:

The cumulative brochure is a document which keeps a visible record of a series of repetitive public meetings, public brochures, workshops and citizen committee meetings. At the beginning of the process, a brochure is prepared presenting various study alternatives along with the pros and cons for each of the alternatives. In a series of public meetings and workshops, individuals, agencies and organizations are invited to submit their own alternatives which are then included in the brochure along with their descriptions of pros, cons, and a no-action alternative. The brochure is then republished with space provided in the brochure for individuals to react to the various alternatives by writing their own pros and cons. These comments then become a part of the new brochure. With each round of meetings or other forums for public comment, the brochure grows by the addition of the public comment and technical response. As used by the developer of the cumulative brochure, the process calls for a series of four public meetings, seven versions of the brochure, three workshops and as many citizens' committee meetings as may be necessary. The final document is quite thick, but does provide a visible record of the entire process.

Advantages of a cumulative brochure:

- The process is very visible and allows the public to see how a decision was reached.
- The process encourages open communication between the various publics as well as between the public and the sponsoring organization.
- No special status is granted to any one individual or group over another.

Disadvantages of the cumulative brochure:

- The final brochure is a large, cumbersome document and the many editions of the brochure can be expensive to produce.
- The effectiveness of the brochure depends on the ability of the sponsoring organization to address the issues in non-bureaucratic language.
- The format of the brochure forces public reaction into a pro or con response when there may be other positions as well.
- Since the sponsoring organization prepares the brochure, groups which are suspicious of that organization may question whether the brochure is biased.

Conducting a contest or event:

Description of the techniques:

One way to obtain publicity for your community involvement program is to stage a contest or event as a means of stimulating interest and gaining newspaper or television coverage. Examples of the use of this technique might include:

- An essay contest in the public schools.
- A photo contest for the best photo about the issue.
- An organic gardening contest.
- Demonstration, e.g. how to build and use a compost system.

The idea is to stage a newsworthy event related to the theme of the citizen participation study. The aim is to not only publicize the citizen participation program, but also to get people involved who will then continue to participate in subsequent citizen participation efforts. Contests or events might be planned, for example, to precede workshops, meetings, or other citizen participation programs in which people could participate.

Advantages of a contest or event:

- May generate substantial interest and publicity.
- Will help to identify individuals interested in the kinds of issues addressed by the study.
- May serve to be educational.

Disadvantages of a contest or event:

- Typically does not produce public comment directly applicable to the issues.
- Expectations may be established for continuing participation which, if not fulfilled, may lead to resentment or cynicism.

Mediation:

Description of the technique:

Mediation is the application of principles of labor/management mediation to environmental or political issues. In mediation, a group is established which represents all major interests which will be affected by a decision. Members of the mediation panel are all "official" representatives of the interests, and are appointed with the understanding that the organizations they represent will have the opportunity to approve or disapprove any agreements which result from the mediation. The basic ground rule which is established is that all agreement will be made by unanimity.

A key element in mediation is the appointment of a third party mediator—someone skilled in mediation, who is not seen as an interested party to the negotiations. The mediator not only structures the deliberations, but often serves as a conduit for negotiations between the various parties.

Mediation is only possible when the various interests in a conflict believe they can accomplish more by negotiation than by continuing to fight.

Advantages of mediation:

- Mediation can result in an agreement which is supported by all parties to the conflict.
- Mediation may lead to quick resolution of issues which might otherwise be dragged out through litigation or other political processes.

Disadvantage of mediation:

- Mediation is an entirely voluntary process, so it will work only when all parties are willing to negotiate.
- Mediation requires a highly skilled third party mediator.

Charrette:

Description of techniques:

A charrette is similar to mediation in that it attempts to bring together all the critical organizations or individuals in an attempt to achieve mutual agreement on an overall plan. The difference is that charrette is designed for a very concentrated block of time such as an entire weekend, a series of nightly meetings for a week, or a series of once-a-week or weekend meetings. The primary characteristic of a charrette is an effort to reach an agreement in a relatively short time by bringing all the critical decision-makers together under one roof until an agreement is reached. Critical elements in a charrette are:

1. All major publics must be present so that decisions, once reached, constitute a consensus.
2. All participants must agree to participate the entire time of the charrette in an effort to resolve differences and arrive at a plan.
3. Everybody coming to the charrette does so with the understanding that the purpose is to develop an agreement that all participants can live with.

A charrette would be a particularly useful technique in a crisis situation, or as a means of resolving an impasse reached between various groups. It could also be used as a means of shortening the time required to make a decision in a planning study once the basic data collection had been completed.

Normally there is extensive publicity surrounding the charrette so that a larger public is aware of and supportive of the efforts to reach a mutual agreement.

Advantages of a charrette:

- Useful as a means of achieving consensus and—since all critical interests are involved—can result in a commitment by all significant groups to support any plan coming out of the charrette.
- The intense nature of the charrette can lead to a deeper understanding of the positions and motivations of other individuals and groups.
- By working together in an intense manner, previously conflicting interests may develop a feeling of teamwork and cooperation which may extend long beyond this particular study.

Disadvantages of charrette:

- Charrettes are effective only when all interested parties are willing to enthusiastically participate, and are willing to accept a negotiated decision.
- Charrettes are very time-consuming, and it is difficult to get key decision makers to make the commitment to participate for the length of time required.
- Charrettes require substantial staff preparation, and can be quite expensive.

Delphi:

Description of the technique:

The Delphi process is a method for obtaining consensus on forecasts by gathering opinions from a group of experts. It might be useful, for example, as a means of estimating future landfill needs by a group of experts with different philosophies and viewpoints. It can also be used as a technique for estimating possible environmental effects of various actions.

The basic procedure is as follows: A questionnaire is submitted individually to participants requesting them to indicate their forecasts concerning the topic. The responses to the questionnaire are consolidated and resubmitted to the participants with a request that they make an estimate of the probable occurrence of each event. The participants' responses are again collected and a statistical summary is prepared. The statistical summary is distributed to all participants and the participants are asked to give a new estimate now that they have seen the response of the total group. Participants whose answers differ substantially from the rest of the group are asked to state the reasons behind their answers. The new responses are then summarized statistically and redistributed to the participants who are asked to prepare a final estimate. A final statistical summary is then prepared based on participants' comments.

Delphi can be combined with other citizen participation techniques. One agency, for example, carried out the Delphi process by distributing the original questionnaire to several thousand people. Even though only a

few responded to the first questionnaire, the results were summarized and redistributed back to the original mailing list. With each redistribution of results, more and more individuals joined in the process. In place of the final summary, a large public meeting was held at which the results of the process were discussed. In this case the Delphi process served to generate considerable public interest, and the agency felt that the final public meeting was much better attended than it would have been without the Delphi process.

Advantages of a Delphi process:

- The Delphi process is an effective tool for achieving a consensus on forecasts among groups of experts.
- Delphi minimizes the disadvantages of group dynamics such as over dominance by a single personality or positions taken to obtain status or acceptance from the group.

Disadvantages of a Delphi process:

- Delphi may have a tendency to homogenize points of view.
- The process of mailing questionnaires and redistributing summaries can be a time-consuming and cumbersome process.
- The public may be no more willing to accept the findings of an expert panel than it would of a single technical expert.
- The experts still may not be right.

Simulation games:

Description of the technique:

There have been a number of simulation games which have been designed to allow people to simulate the effects of making particular policy choices and decisions. As part of the process, participants learn more about the impact of decisions and the interrelatedness of various features of an environmental or economic system. Simulation gaming provides an opportunity for people to try out their positions, and see what the consequences would be and how other groups would react to them. Simulation games vary greatly in their complexity and length of time required to play them. Unfortunately, the closer the game resembles "reality," the more lengthy and complex it usually becomes.

While a simulation game can serve as an effective educational device — as a method for informing the public of the consequences of various choices — it typically does not provide opportunities for the public to comment specifically on study issues. As a result, a simulation game could be used to educate an advisory group or leadership group of some sort, but must be used in conjunction with other citizen participation techniques.

Advantages of a simulation game:

- Simulation games can provide the public with information about the consequences of various policy positions or decisions.
- Simulation games can provide the public with an understanding of the dynamics of an economic or environmental system.
- Participation in a simulation game is usually fun, and participants develop a rapport and communication which can be maintained throughout the entire project or decision-making process.

Disadvantages of a simulation game:

- There are a number of simulation games on the market which are confusing, overly technical or misleading. You will have to exercise great care in selecting a simulation game appropriate for your particular problem.
- While simulation games can be educational, they typically don't provide opportunities for direct public comment on your project.
- Since few games have a perfect fit with reality, citizens may apply the game rules inappropriately to the actual situation.
- People may become so engrossed in the game that they forget about the actual issues at hand.

Providing technical assistance to citizens:

Description of the technique:

The public often feels intimidated by professional staff, and feels that agencies are able to present their points of view in well-argued technical studies, while the public does not have these resources available. Several agencies have provided technical assistance to citizens by providing staff or consultants to help various interests or individuals develop their own alternatives, or to help them analyze issues or evaluate the impacts of various alternatives. Whether this assistance can be provided by internal staff or "independent" consultants depends on the relationship that exists between the planning agency and the community. The purpose of providing this technical assistance is to ensure that citizens who have different values and orientations than the organization's are able to develop their ideas using the same kind of technical expertise as that possessed by the organization itself. In highly controversial situations, the "facts" generated by independent technical assistance may be accepted more readily than "facts" generated by the organization's professional staff.

If the sponsoring organization is already committed to a particular alternative, then the staff assigned to provide technical assistance will find themselves in the awkward position of having to "serve two masters."

Advantages of technical assistance:

- Technical assistance can reduce the likelihood that citizens will feel intimidated by the expertise of professional staff.
- Ideas from the public can be developed to the same level of expertise as ideas generated by the organization.
- Information generated by "independent" sources may be more acceptable to the public than those generated by the organization's staff in controversial situations.

Disadvantages of technical assistance:

- If the organization is not open to all alternatives, then organization staff may be placed in the position of divided loyalties. It is difficult to provide technical assistance to all groups, instead of simply the most active.
- The public can still fear that technical assistance will be used to mislead them or manipulate them to accept the organization's viewpoint.

Training programs for citizens:

Description of the technique:

Training programs are usually conducted to improve citizens' understanding of how studies are conducted, to inform them of technical information necessary to understand the study, or to improve communication between citizens and staff. Those training programs for citizens which have been used in citizen participation have typically been in these three areas:

1. Training about the planning and decision-making process.
2. Training on substantive content such as planning, environmental impact assessment, etc.
3. Skills of working together as a team or skills of meeting leadership.

This training might be accomplished formally through seminars, workshops and lectures, or it may be conducted more informally through simulation games, informal round-table discussions, brown-bag lunches, or through publications or audiovisual material.

The intent of providing training to citizens is to ensure they have sufficient background to participate effectively in the citizen participation program, and also to provide citizens a more equal footing with professionals, so they can work with professionals without being intimidated by the professionals' expertise. Training in group dynamics or meeting leadership can be effective when there are problems in working together effectively, or when citizens will be assisting in conducting meetings or workshops.

Advantages of a citizen training program:

- Training may increase the effectiveness or impact the public has upon the study.
- When fully informed, citizens may feel less intimidated by professionals and will be more likely to express differing viewpoints.
- When properly trained, citizens can make a valuable contribution to conducting the community involvement program.

Disadvantages of a citizen training program:

- Some citizens may resent the suggestion that they need training or may question the "objectivity" of a training program conducted by a planning agency.
- Training is usually limited to a small group and, therefore, there are problems of who is included and who is excluded.
- Conducting an effective training program requires special training skills, and therefore may require the additional cost of an outside consultant.
- The training must be integral to the planning or decision-making process or citizens will view the training as wasted time and effort.

Subsection III

Analysis of public comment

One of the questions we are often asked is, "How do we evaluate the data from the public once we get it?" To be honest, no one has a completely satisfactory answer. The process of shaping a consensus among a number of varied interests is unscientific at best. However, we have developed some ideas which may give some general guidance. First and foremost is to eliminate the concept of "evaluation" and change it to one of "analysis". Secondly, the process must be as objective as possible.

Purpose of analysis

The purpose of analysis is to summarize and display the number, content, and nature of public input so that staff and decision-makers can make recommendations and decisions. Public input analysis seeks to identify public opinions and values and their underlying reasons, and new ideas and information about such factors as issues, policies, rules, geographic areas, and resource management alternatives.

Principles of public input analysis

The principles outlined below form the basis for effective public input analysis:

Analysis describes what the public said. Analysis seeks only to describe what the public said as completely and directly as possible. Analysis procedures do not assign any weights or policy recommendations or interpret the importance of various kinds of public input. Importance is judged in the evaluation phase, not during analysis. Analysis provides a structured process to ensure consistency in the way each public comment is handled and processed. The analysis process summarizes public comments in such a way that decision-makers or reviewers of the analysis can evaluate

what the various segments of the public prefer and why. The analysis process helps determine what the facts in question are, what arguments are advanced in support of views held by various segments of the interested publics, and where publics agree on issues and where they don't.

Decision questions guide analysis.

The decision-makers identify questions that need to be answered by public input; analysis attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What opinions were expressed concerning management alternatives, general subjects, and other issues?
2. Why do certain groups, agencies, or individuals feel as they do?
3. Who responded (individuals or organizations)?
4. Where did the public input originate (locally, regionally, or nationally)?
5. How did opinions vary according to such factors as form of input (statements at hearings, letters, petitions, response forms, etc.)?
6. What additional information, ideas, and issues were presented?

All public input is relevant and must be processed. All input expresses opinions and values and may have important implications to staff and decision-makers. Analysis must include all input, regardless of its form or detail. Analysis records and summarizes all public input, including emotional statements, general opinions, and other expressions of values, as well as the more specific comments about management proposals or solutions.

Analysis must be systematic, objective, visible, and traceable. Effective analysis requires the following:

1. A structured procedure which checks and balances the way in which input is handled and processed.
2. Personal prejudices and subjectivity must not affect the way in which input is summarized. Analysis must assure that an independent review would generate the same information.
3. Analysis is a distinct and necessary phase in the participation process. In addition, the product of analysis must be available for review by the public.
4. An independent party should be able to follow the manner in which the public input was handled. The analysis procedure must leave "tracks" so the analysis can be replicated.

Identity of input must be maintained. Combining, weighing, or evaluating input is not done during analysis. Results from different kinds of participation methods must be summarized separately so the decision made can distinguish, if necessary, between different kinds of input when deciding what importance to attach to them.

Analysis is a continuing process. Analyzing public input can be a problem because important resource management decisions often evolve over several years. Public input which affects a given decision might be solicited and concentrated in several critical periods. The balance of opinion can change as more people become involved, more and better information is obtained, and public attitudes shift in response to changing situations. Thus, it is necessary to consider public input within all critical periods and obtain an overview of trends and preferences.

Identify decision questions. Know what information the decision-makers want from the public. This is key to a useful analysis. These questions not only guide analysis but also the collection and evaluation phases of the process as well.

Survey public input to determine breadth of issues. Obtain an overview of issues discussed and information provided in the public input by using a content summary. This summary defines the range and diversity of opinions, supporting reasons, and factual material contained in the input. The structure of the analysis should not filter out any new or unanticipated information. To be responsive to the varying nature of public input, the analysis system must be able to capture the full breadth of public input so it can be summarized for review.

Alternative methods of analysis

The following are other general forms of analysis:

1. **Issue analysis:** A method to isolate the area of concern using the words or statement of input, such as, "I don't care what solution you use, just protect our water quality!"
2. **Content analysis:** Tends to be a choice of words that sends a site-specific solution, such as, "Please build a recycling center on Red Rover Road east of Canne."
3. **Numerical approaches:** There are a number of approaches to sampling the opinions and feelings of the public which lend themselves to analysis in more or less quantifiable terms. Sometimes, when the data is arranged in this manner, several answers fall out right away. This has the advantage of being relatively objective and scientific. Our experience is that much of the time numerical approaches are useful for

data retrieval but still don't give you the critical information you need to make a decision. If your data tells you that of 450 persons responding, (which may be anything but a scientifically designed sample), 250 are for an issue and 200 are against it, so what? The base population you are dealing with may be over 200,000. You don't know much except that you have a controversy on your hands and you had probably figured that out already. Numerical approaches are helpful, but they are only part of the answer.

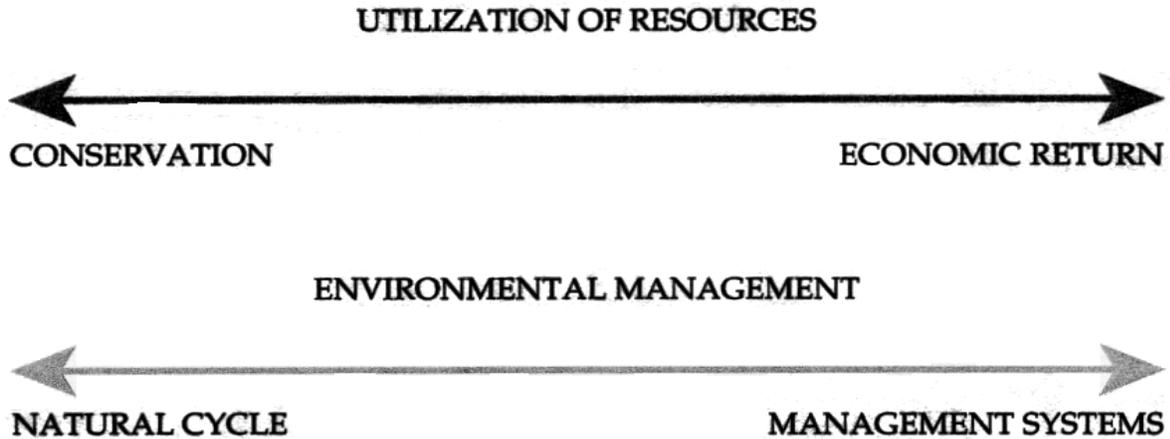
4. **Values analysis.** Using a matrix that has relevant dimensions to the issue at hand, comments are plotted on this two-dimensional chart, (or three-dimensional computer software program), to identify "values clusters." Once identified, those clusters or "positions" can be used to formulate alternative planning options. The procedure for values analysis follows.

You may find it helpful to analyze the information from the public based on the "values-laden language" contained in it—words such as "raping the land," "over-mature trees," or "natural." You may even find it possible to set up a numerical tally of values-laden language in much the same manner as you would conduct a content analysis by keeping a numerical tally of frequently occurring values-laden terms. Once you feel you have isolated major values issues, set the opposing positions up as opposite ends of a continuum. For example:

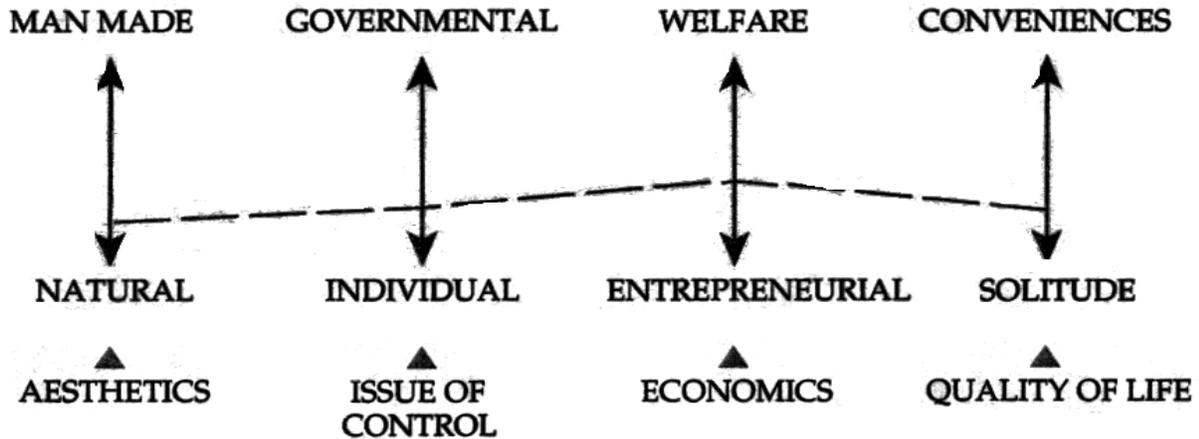


You may also be able to identify positions which constitute midpoints along the continuum.

Develop a methodology for displaying the continuums. We often find that on many issues it is possible to capture the differences between publics with as few as two continuums. For example:

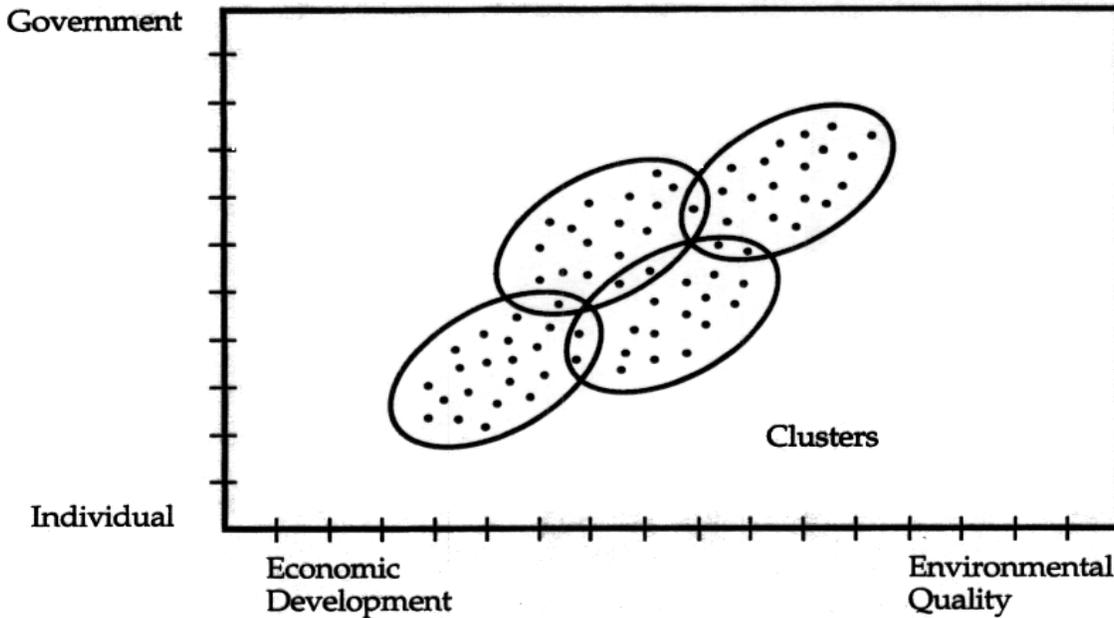


When there are more than two continuums necessary to distinguish groups, you may have to use another display method. For example:



Once you have established a display methodology, test the appropriateness of the continuums you have selected by attempting to differentiate major publics using the display.

Identify clusters of publics: Identify on your display the location of the publics you have identified. This may be done either by groups or by individuals. Be certain, however, when you attempt to locate a group in the display that you work from actual information received from the group rather than your own preconception of the group's position. If you are working with individuals, you may actually be able to develop a frequency distribution based on their inputs. For example:



Such a frequency (whether of groups or individuals) would suggest that you have four major values clusters.

Develop alternatives for each values cluster: Once you have identified your values clusters, you can then develop an alternative to portray the values represented by each cluster, thus ensuring that all major values held by the public are incorporated in the planning.

There are two major advantages of this methodology:

1. Often there are shared values between different publics that are not apparent when public input is examined only for proposed action.
2. This technique serves as a check against other techniques of analysis to ensure that no major cluster of publics is unrepresented by an alternative.

Evaluating citizen participation programs

There have been a number of efforts to evaluate citizen participation programs, and while expertise is improving, there are some inherent problems. Some of the problems inherent in evaluating citizen participation programs include:

1. Each person or interest defines his objectives for the citizen participation program differently.
2. Some citizen participation goals have to do with how the citizen participation process is conducted, and some have to do with achieving agreement on content.
3. The benefit of citizen participation in terms of building legitimacy and credibility for the organization are cumulative, rather than derived from any one program.
4. If the purpose of citizen participation is defined as getting agreement or reducing conflict, not all citizen participation programs may "succeed," even though they have been more than adequate when other criteria are applied.
5. It is difficult to measure some of the intangible benefits of citizen participation.
6. Efforts to measure citizen participation sometimes result in changes in the way citizen participation is conducted.

In many ways evaluating citizen participation is like evaluating a safety program. A safety program cannot prevent all accidents, nor is it always possible to tell what savings result from a safety program, because this depends on your beliefs about what would have happened if there had been no safety program.

Because citizen participation is a combination of technical information, feelings, value judgments, and relationship types of communication, many of the measurements could be written in behavioral terms.

For example, one measure might be to ask the public, "On a scale of one to ten, how satisfied were you with the efforts of the Town Board to reach the public on this project?" Other measurements might be as straightforward as "ten meetings were held and no injunctions were filed."

One of the increasing worries of managing the citizen participation process is answering questions such as: How did we do? Did we do a good job? Could we have done more? Less? Obviously, most of these questions cannot be answered if you have not defined the end results you wish to accomplish as part of all of the planned interactions with the public. Major evaluations of the program can come from matching the measurable results against defined objectives.

Another approach to evaluating citizen participation programs takes into account that each major actor has different objectives and expectations (which means that there may be different estimates of the program's success), yet provides relatively objective information and at the same time protects the basic integrity of the citizen participation program.

The basic steps in this evaluation process include:

1. Define who the major actors are.
2. Establish citizen participation objectives for each major actor.
3. Establish measures.
4. Establish standards.
5. Determine the extent to which the program meets the standards established for each major actor.

This approach to evaluation will not give a single answer, but will tell how successful the program was for each actor.

Some decision-makers have applied surveys as a measurement tool, "surveying publics" who were a part of the program and a cross-section random sample of the general public.

Additional tools are one-to-one interviews with some of the working "publics," feedback balloting as part of the ongoing program, monitoring of workshops, and team assessments. Sometimes consultants are hired to evaluate the citizen participation plan or monitor a particular part. These consultant evaluations are based on exposure to other organizations and the results of their programs.

Or periodically, a management team can meet with the project team, study manager, project leader, or citizen participation coordinator to assess progress.

Thoughts on evaluation

Let me close this chapter, section and guide with these comments made by Dr. Jerry Delli Priscoli at a conference on evaluating citizen participation programs held in Washington, D.C. in February, 1980. Dr. Priscoli is with the Institute of Water Resource, Corps of Engineers.

"One fundamental consideration in the evaluation of citizen participation programs is the impact of the evaluation process on the citizen participation program itself. Traditional paradigms of evaluation assume that the evaluator is a "stand-off" objective observer. In fact the term "rigor" often simply stands for the degree to which subjectivity is removed from the evaluation process."

All practitioners know—and this has been the source of some conflict between citizen participation practitioners and evaluators—that subjecting citizen participation programs to evaluation begins to change the program. People are aware of being "measured." The consequences of actions are interpreted not just for the utility in the immediate situation, but how they affect the evaluation. Often the actual modes of citizens' response are modified to use those which lend themselves to measurement, rather than "softer," more subjective modes which may have as much or more political utility. The fear of many practitioners is that the evaluation will drive the process, rather than measure it. The evaluator is clearly part of, interacts with, and changes the very thing that is being measured.

One area in which the maturity of citizen participation as an established body of knowledge and the maturity of evaluation procedures clearly can interact is in the area of evaluating specific techniques. Many early evaluations of citizen participation plans found few positive results because the organization running the citizen participation programs assumed that they consisted only of public hearings.

As knowledge about citizen participation has increased, the use of public hearings has generally been discredited except for specialized situations. Rather than evaluations proving that citizen participation didn't work, the evaluations simply showed use of inappropriate use of a specific citizen participation techniques didn't work. Only now, as we are beginning to get an understanding of the appropriate use of citizen participation techniques, can we begin to put forward "best case" citizen participation examples which will allow some evaluation of citizen participation as a field.

Evaluating citizen participation as an end

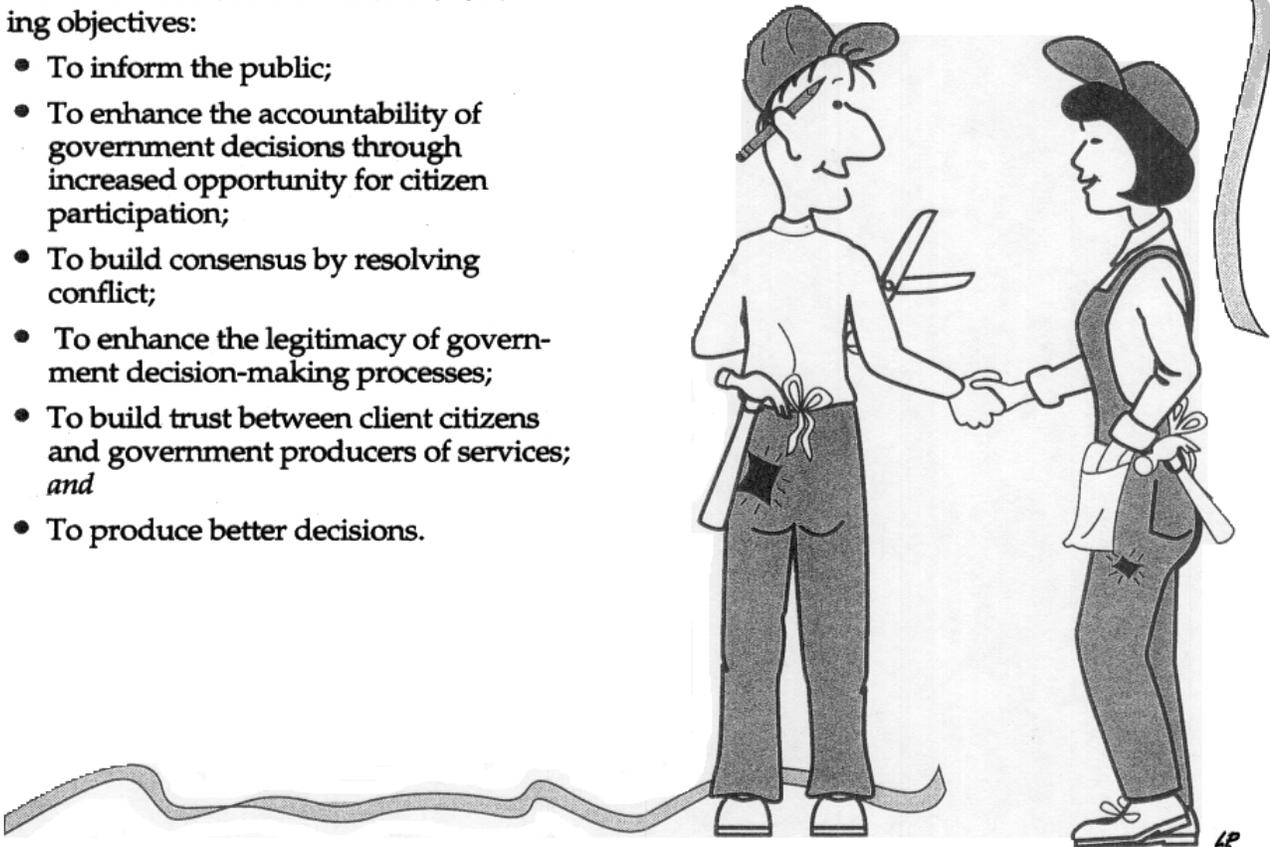
Most efforts to evaluate citizen participation measure its efficiency or cost-effectiveness. In other words, citizen participation is approached as a means, not an end. This is natural. But in your evaluation, you should remember that citizen participation is a democratic faith — a belief that a decision of and by the people is “better” whether or not it is more cost effective or efficiently made. As a citizen participation practitioner, you will have to find some way to quantify this and other less quantifiable benefits to fairly assess the value of your efforts.

Practically speaking, you should approach any decision or project as potentially benefitting from citizen involvement if it impacts people and their values and has some or all of the following objectives:

- To inform the public;
- To enhance the accountability of government decisions through increased opportunity for citizen participation;
- To build consensus by resolving conflict;
- To enhance the legitimacy of government decision-making processes;
- To build trust between client citizens and government producers of services;
and
- To produce better decisions.

As I stated at the beginning, there is no one right way to do citizen participation. I have given you some tools and strategies to get you started. You will soon devise your own tools and strategies to fit the needs of your publics. It will be work. Your co-workers may at first be uncomfortable with having to learn new ways to get their duties done. But, I promise you, you will find citizen participation challenging and rewarding. Good luck!

—Bill Wiedman



If you would like to read more . . .

The Public Involvement Manual [1981]. Creighton, James L.

A manual on designing and conducting public involvement as part of corporate or agency decision-making.

An Advanced Citizen Participation Workshop [1987]. Synergy (Wilbur A. Wiedman, Jr. 4110 S. Detroit Ave., Tulsa, OK 74105.)

A handbook outlining a flexible planning process for citizen participation, including useful readings in areas of particular relevance to agency problem-solving, and describing some techniques.

Citizen Participation Handbook: For Public Officials and Other Professionals Serving the Public. Bleiker, Hans and Annamarie (Institute for Participatory Planning, 969 Pacific St., Suite 10, Monterey, CA 93940)

This handbook outlines a rigorous planning process and gives useful descriptions of many participation techniques.

Citizen Advisory Committees: How to Make Them Work [1982]. Lagerroos, Dorothy.

An enlightening booklet on the problems of working with and serving on a citizens advisory committee.

Running Effective Meetings and Conferences [1977]. Kellar, Robert.

A study unit (audio tape and attendant printed materials) designed to improve the planning and execution of meetings.

Beyond Experts: A Guide for Citizen Group Training [1979]. Magnani, David, Duane and Dale, and Miller, Robin.

A manual for people who want to build the effectiveness of citizen groups and for those who take an active role as trainers for citizen involvement.

A Handbook of Non-verbal Group Exercises [1975]. Morris, Kenneth T. and Cinnamon, Kenneth.

This handbook offers scores of exercises for facilitating group efforts. It gives detailed "how-to" instructions in a useful layout that focuses on what the group is trying to achieve.

A Handbook of Verbal Group Exercises [1979]. Morris, Kenneth R. and Cinnamon, Kenneth.

This handbook follows the same approach for verbal communications as the above volume on non-verbal communications.

You Can Negotiate Anything: The World's Best Negotiator Tells You How To Get What You Want [1982]. Cohen, Herb.

The classic book on negotiation.

Getting to Yes: Negotiating and Agreement Without Giving In [1981]. Fisher, Roger and Ury, William.

A readable and practical primer on principled negotiation.

Communication in Small Group Discussions: A Case Study Approach. Cragan, John F. and Wright, David W.

Treats theories, principles and applications of effective small group discussion, illustrating and reinforcing the information via frequent case studies.

How To Read a Person Like a Book and What To Do About It [1971]. Nierenberg, Gerald I. and Calero, Henry H.

A handbook of types of nonverbal communication that will give insights into the significance of gestures.

Listening Made Easy: How To Improve Listening on the Job, at Home, and in the Community [1981]. Montgomery, Robert L.

A practical book that explains the blocks to listening and how to overcome them; the skills for effective listening and how to apply them.

Listening: Sharpening Your Analytical Skills [1977]. Freundmann, Alex.

A study unit (audio tape and attendant printed materials) designed to strengthen listening skills and understand analytical listening.

Public Involvement Techniques: A Reader of Ten Years Experience at the Institute for Water Resources [1983]. Creighton, James L.

"Ideas." Green Seal, Box R, Stanford, CA 94309.

This institute produces information on recycling and environmental issues in the public decision-making forum. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for information.

About the author...

Bill has acquired a background in engineering, life science, banking, human resources, institutional systems and change, and management. After attending the United States Naval Academy and serving in the military, he attended University of Nebraska School of Engineering, and went on to receive a degree in American History from San Francisco State College and a Masters Degree in Organizational Development from Pepperdine. He is now completing a Doctorate Degree in Psychology.

For the past 20 years as a partner and, later, owner of Synergy, he has consulted with and provided citizen participation training to a broad range of local, regional, state and federal government clients as well as private corporations. Clients include the Wisconsin, Maryland, Missouri and Navajo Nation Departments of Natural Resources; the Utah and Kentucky Fish and Game agencies; the California Department of Parks and Recreation; the New York Department of Environmental Conservation; and other natural resource agencies in New Jersey, Oklahoma, Washington, Arizona, Oregon and Florida. In addition, he has worked with other groups such as the Zuni Tribal Government, Federal Aviation Administration, Florida Soil and Water Conservation Boards, Southwestern and Mountain Bell, Council of Government in several states, Federal Highway Administration, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Agriculture-Forest Service, National Park Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Administration and many others. All these projects primarily focused on how to involve a wide range of interest groups in the agency's planning and decision-making process and how to improve the agency's collaborative processes.

Bill resides in Tulsa, Oklahoma with his wife, Dina, and sons Aaron, 8, and Jacob, 4.



Wilbur A. Wiedman, Jr.

APPENDIX B: Case “Snapshots”

This appendix includes a handful of one- and two-page case snapshots in public participation, each illustrating one or more key ideas. These were developed for some conference sessions and training workshops held jointly by Mary Hamel, Wisconsin DNR, and Beth Carlson, Minnesota DNR. The Department thanks Beth and the Minnesota DNR for their gracious generosity in allowing us to use their case studies. Our gratitude also goes to Maggie Creighton of Creighton and Creighton, consultants, for their willingness to share one of the stories.

The attached case snapshots include:

[Working Toward Common Ground](#)

A Wisconsin case study on the DNR’s land use project. This study highlights how to determine your public participation objectives and then use them to design your process.

[The Swimming Pool](#)

A story of a Wisconsin city’s unsuccessful attempt to build a swimming pool. This story illustrates the importance of involving people early and the true costs of not involving them.

[Multi-Level Access Design](#)

This Minnesota story shows one way to handle it when there are differing levels of interest in your project.

[Keeping the Horse in Front of the Cart](#)

A couple of Minnesota stories illustrate the need to be sincere about using input if you are asking for it, thinking ahead about how you will use it, and recognizing the wisdom others can bring to a process.

[Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Management Planning](#)

A fascinating Minnesota case study about river planning. This story explores using very large open-ended groups to do the planning, empowering the public to make decisions, and the time-commitment than can be required.

[A Tale of Two Open Houses](#)

Two Minnesota stories illustrating how one technique, open houses, can have different results in different settings and how you can adapt that technique to fit the occasion.

[Mail-In Maps: Planning Without Meeting](#)

A California case study shows one way to reach out to a community when participation, particularly at meetings, is low.

[Switching Boats in Mid-Stream](#)

From Wisconsin’s effort to write criteria for listing Outstanding Resource Waters. This case illustrates using knowledge about the community to anticipate process needs and prepare contingencies as well as the need for flexibility and adapting to the public’s process needs.

WORKING TOWARD COMMON GROUND

Background

In 1993, recognizing the great influence of land use on the state's natural resources and environment, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources formed a staff task force to frame the issue for the agency and identify steps the DNR could take to improve land use decisions.

Staff completed their report in June 1994. At that point, the agency decided to ask the public about the issue. As DNR began to discuss involving the public in this policy issue, two realities emerged:

- the Department had already produced a report and it was thus too late to get the public involved “up front” and
- land use is a very broad topic – we couldn't just ask “so what do you think?”

With these considerations in mind, the DNR began to identify objectives for the public participation process. What did we want to know from the public? How could/would we use it? What would their role be?

Clearly, the DNR couldn't develop policy and plan collaboratively with the public, we already had a draft of it! So, rather than ignore the draft report, we decided to use it as the backbone for involving the public. We would focus on 4 specific aspects in the report and get the public to help us review and improve them:

- What should be our common vision for land use in the state?
- What do we mean by sound land use – what criteria define it?
- What should the DNR's role be in land use decisions in the state?
- What should be the DNR's priorities related to land use?

Now we had specific objectives – we wanted the public to review and revise these 4 key areas of our draft report.

We also knew we wanted the full state to answer these questions: we wanted to hear from people around the state and with a range of perspectives. We also felt there was value in having these people hear from each other so understanding could be increased. A subobjective was to understand better where there was agreement and where there was disagreement.

Can you see how much easier designing a public participation plan around these specific objectives is than “getting the public's opinion about land use?”

10 Public Discussion Sessions

If you want people to talk and listen to each other, you get them together. If you want to include people from all over the state, you go all over the state. Thus, the DNR held 10 sessions around Wisconsin. And, because we didn't want to leave out people who couldn't make the meetings, we distributed 3000 copies of the draft report, each with a mail-back comment form that closely mirrored the meeting process.

A specific meeting tool was designed for each of the 4 information objectives.

- Vision: Having received the vision in advance, participants could write and post comments on the statement.
- Sound Land Use: Facilitated small groups discussed the posted draft criteria and added to them. Then, individually participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with each criterion using green or red dots.
- DNR's role: In facilitated small groups, participants discussed things about land use in Wisconsin they would like to change. For each change, they explored what the DNR's role should be and their own role.
- DNR's priorities: Participants were given a form listing 25 actions, from the draft report, DNR could take. Participants ranked each from low to high priority or indicated “Don't do.” The form was on 2-part carbonless paper so they could leave their comments with us, but also could take a copy home.

Public Participation Handbook

After the originally scheduled meetings, we analyzed our attendance sheets against previously identified list of interested and affected populations. We discovered we had limited input from central city and urban areas. To fill that gap, we worked with community leaders and groups within Milwaukee to sponsor a special session to get input from those constituencies.

Each of the 4 tools was developed with a social science researcher, who would analyze the results. He made sure our input tools could be clearly analyzed. At the end of the entire process, he identified common themes and rated the prioritized actions, based on input from both meetings and written submissions.

The public's input changed our ideas, report, and direction. The conversations alone helped elevate the issue in the state and made change happen.

The Morals of This Tale

- Be clear on your objectives.
- Tailor the tool to the objective.
- Think ahead about how you'll use the information.

Find ways to hear from the under-heard.

From Mary Hamel, Wisconsin DNR

THE SWIMMING POOL

Background

A prosperous mid-sized Midwest city had no public pool. The city's Parks Commission studied developing a number of pools around the city. They decided the first of these was to be located at one of the city parks along one of the lakes and proceeded to plan for this pool, without involving the public in deciding whether to build a pool or in defining criteria for siting and designing the pool.

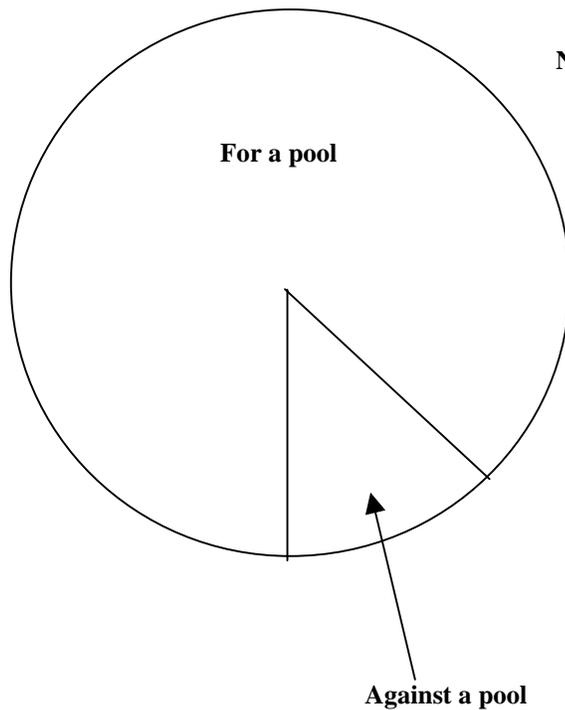
Although the majority of the city's residents probably felt a pool was a great idea, many were upset with the chosen location, which would have resulted in the loss of woods along a lakeshore and would have required kids to cross a busy thoroughfare, along with other concerns.

What Happened

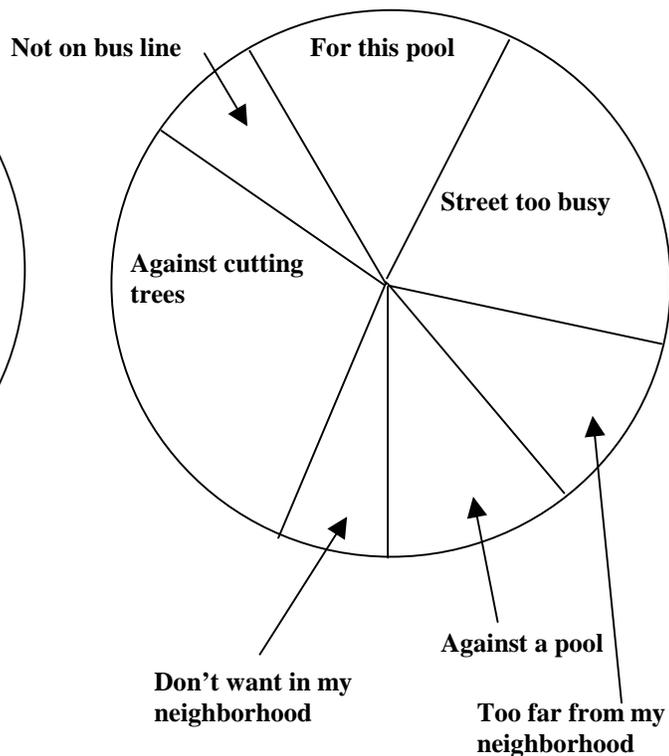
Grass roots opposition to the proposed pool led the way to a referendum. The referendum, which passed easily, required the city to hold referendums on any construction projects that cost more than \$500,000 and are near waterfront parks, including the pool.

- 5. This referendum not only killed this pool proposal, but the others that were being studied. \$800,000 in private donations had to be returned. Some estimated the newly passed referendum would force 6 and 12 month delays on other projects, including a golf course expansion already proposed at the time of the referendum. Others feared it would greatly delay or prevent a city convention center.

Public sentiment before specific proposal



Public sentiment with specific proposal



The Morals of This Tale

- Involve people early in your decision process, e.g. in identifying issues and decision criteria
- When analyzing the costs and benefits of participation, consider costs of NOT involving the public

From Mary Hamel, Wisconsin DNR

MULTI-LEVEL ACCESS DESIGN

Monitor-Consult-Advise

Some people just want information and they expect to receive the courtesy of being kept informed. Others are more deeply interested in the content and product, but they don't have the time or inclination to attend meetings. Another set of interested parties (sometimes groups, sometimes specific individuals) want to have say in the matter throughout the process.

In designing a participation process, don't let yourself get trapped into thinking that you can or should only provide one level of access. Particularly with longer-term complex projects, interested parties will have different capacities for participating. That said, their support (or lack of active opposition) may still be needed at a later stage. Communication activities as well as classic "participation" activities can be very important, so your participation process design should take into account varying needs and expectations by participants.

Larry Aggens' "Orbits of Participation" and IAP2's "Public Participation Spectrum" are both useful illustrations. The "Orbits" piece shows the varied levels of interest both inside and outside of organizations, be they agency staff, local government officials, businesses, or the general public. The "Spectrum" shows that different levels of access can be provided, and the main point here is that they are not mutually exclusive.

Example: Wetlands Planning and Management Guidance in Minnesota

Development of the Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Plan (MWCP) and a subsequent project to develop wetland management guidance tailored to one region both provided multiple levels of participation access to the project. It was done precisely because interested parties identified their own differing needs. The effort was generally effective and consistent throughout the MWCP project, but unfortunately it was not carried through in the regional project due to a staffing change.

On the back is a sample sign-up form asking interested parties to define how they want to participate. Similar examples exist in Wisconsin; this sample form was in fact adapted from a Wisconsin DNR document.

The Morals of This Tale

- You'll never know the trouble you'll miss by taking the time to remember the less-involved but still very interested and possibly influential people.
- Going the extra mile to make it possible for people to participate according to their capacity and interest will go a long way towards build credibility and trust.

Sign-up Form

Time Period: May 1998 to March 2000

YES! I want to contribute my help and advice to "Wetlands Guidance for the Anoka Sand Plain"

Please print clearly:

Name Daytime Phone / Evening Phone

Title / Organization Fax Number

Address E-mail address

City, State, Zip Code

Desired level of interaction:

(rank 1, 2, and 3 by your preference)

ADVISE: Serve on the technical advisory committee.
Meetings every 1-2 months are anticipated.

CONSULT: Review and comment from time to time, mostly in writing and possibly in an occasional meeting.

Check one box:

Send information by e-mail OR regular mail

MONITOR: Receive general updates.

Check one box:

Send information by e-mail OR regular mail

I recommend contacting following persons or groups who may be interested in this project:

Name

Organization (if applicable)

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Name

Organization (if applicable)

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Thank you!

Please leave this form with the facilitator or fax to 296-1811 by Friday, June 19.

Elizabeth Carlson - MN DNR, November 2000

KEEPING THE HORSE IN FRONT OF THE CART: ACTUALLY USING PUBLIC INPUT

Yes, We Really Mean It

People should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives [Core Value #1]. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision [Core Value #2].

Too often, a lot of time and energy are put into collecting public input and far less thought goes into how the public input will be used. When people go to the trouble of showing up for a meeting, writing comments, offering their ideas . . . they are owed the courtesy and respect shown when someone pays attention to what they had to say.

Besides, you never know where the bright ideas will come from - they don't always come just from the science or the experts. Somebody just might actually ask a question or offer a suggestion about something that hasn't been considered - perhaps an overlooked detail, another alternative, or an unanticipated effect. Participation, when done well and with integrity, should boost the chances of a higher quality and more durable decision.

"Doe" County State Lands Management

Sometimes, no matter what you do to encourage participatory decision making, some people are going to be stuck in a different mental model. In "Doe" County (as in John Doe), the Minnesota DNR worked hard to collect broad public input on a set of state land management decisions. To wrap up the decision making, a staff meeting was held to go over any last disagreements, whether among agency staff or from the public. It was an odd meeting; everyone seemed to be trying to make the discussion work but it felt "off." Only later did the facilitator learn that some land managers in the room were befuddled by her questions about resolving objections and disagreements from the public. They had figured out the "right" management choices themselves, so what were they supposed to do with the public input? The real question about whether the public raised intelligent and thoughtful questions and alternative choices was not on their radar screen at all.

The Essential Bit of Wisdom That Came Out "Outer Space"

Example #1: Development of Minnesota DNR's electronic licensing system. When the work group suggested a PC on every license seller's counter, the idea was roundly rejected and the work group began learning about what might work. The second idea of using a 10-key calculator with a card reader was better, but not good enough. The third proposal for a card reader with a small pullout keyboard finally addressed the need on a compact device that was relatively easy to use.

Example #2: Development of Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Plan. In the beginning, agency staff and environmental interests resisted discussing the concept of regional differences; they were quite comfortable with one-size-fits-all regulations. When issues were being identified for the plan through a series of 20 focus groups, the most consistent message was that regional differences and regulatory simplification had to be discussed. In the end, a regional framework and simplification became central features of the state wetlands plan due to the persistent voice of interested parties across the state.

The Morals of This Tale

- Be honest about it: use public input the way you've promised, or don't ask for it at all.
- You never know where the rich bit of wisdom or fresh thinking might come from.

Elizabeth Carlson - MN DNR, November 2000

LOWER ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVERWAY MANAGEMENT PLANNING*

Situation

The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway lies on the border between Minnesota and Wisconsin and immediately adjacent to the Mpls.-St. Paul metropolitan area (pop. 3 million). The St. Croix has a long history of controversy that had rallied strong interest groups on both sides of such issues as a power plant and a highway bridge. The lower river's excellent water quality makes it very desirable for recreation and five state parks line its banks. About 45 diverse interest groups were identified. With much of the river's management focused on regulating private land use to protect scenic values and regulating recreational use to reduce conflicts, the potential for controversy and "win-lose" scenarios was great.

Participation/Leadership Innovation

Project managers created the Lower St. Croix Planning Task Force and invited all 45 interest groups to participate, with the pledge that if the group could reach consensus on any management strategies for the river, the three resource agencies would include that in the overall Plan. Membership in the task force remained open-ended, meaning anyone who attended and wanted to participate was a member.

The task force met 53 times over 20 months, with attendance ranging from 30 to 200 people. They developed a range of alternatives and, finally, went through a four-month decision-making exercise in an attempt to reach consensus on specific management directions. A caucus-negotiating process was used. The task force reached consensus on 79 of 108 decision points, a success rate of 75%. The remaining items were referred to the Lower St. Croix Management Commission for agency decision. The draft plan was published in August 1999 and is expected to be fully implemented by April 2002.

Observations

This type of participatory planning takes a lot more time and patience than traditional planning by managing agencies, and individual meetings take considerable preparation. However, in the case of highly controversial issues where there are many polarized interest groups, public buy-in on the process and the outcome is considerably higher. The risk that legal action by one interest group may delay plan implementation is significantly reduced.

The Morals of This Tale

- Advisory groups can have permeable boundaries if that meets the needs for inclusiveness
- Be prepared for the time investment to stand by commitment to broad participation

By Steve Johnson, MN DNR

A TALE OF TWO OPEN HOUSES

The "Open House" Technique

You may remember an "open house" that your family or church or a new local business has held. It's an informal reception-like event. The term is familiar to most people, at least in Minnesota.

As a public participation technique, an "Open House" is an informal setting that allows for one-to-one exchanges between any concerned/interested person and the public officials and professionals involved in the matter. Attendees have the opportunity to mill around, going back and forth among displays of information and materials, familiarizing themselves with the various facets of the proposed plan or action. An open house is also useful in getting attendees' viewpoints and perceptions communicated directly to the public officials and professionals.

An open house may not be appropriate when there is an intense need for group discussion or when project staff, leaders, or decision makers are unwilling to interact directly with the public. While you can collect written comments at an open house, do not mislead attendees to think that it's a vote to determine the final decision.

Do serve refreshments! Do have colorful, interactive, show-&-tell displays!

The Savage Fen Open House - November 1997

A classic example of a pure open house that went "by the numbers." The issue concerned the future of a rare type of wetland in the developing suburb of Savage, near the Minnesota River.

How the open house fit our objectives: On a contentious issue, we wanted to reach beyond the local officials and neighboring landowners into the wider community of citizens to share information, to answer questions and to hear their feedback and other ideas.

Adaptation used: Other interested parties were offered their own stations to display their own materials (maps, plans, fact sheets, etc.) and talk one-on-one with attendees.

The Con-Con Lands Open Houses — May 1999 and December 1999

A good example of how things can go wrong despite your preparations, and how to respond.

How the open house fit our objectives: On a contentious issue, we wanted to reach beyond the local officials and neighboring landowners into the wider community of citizens to share information, to answer questions and to hear their feedback and other ideas.

- a. An open house gets "hijacked": Some local officials took control of an open house to vent their opinions and perhaps to prevent the contact DNR was seeking with local residents. Some attendees simply left when the low key open house format was lost.
- b. Adaptation for the later round: An unusual hybrid combining an open house with a presentation and a public comment period.

The Morals of This Tale

- **Anticipation and adaptation** are two of your best tools in designing a participation strategy.
- The same tool will not work exactly the same way in every situation.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Blending the Open House and Public Forum Techniques

The "**Open House**" is an informal setting which allows for one-on-one exchanges, usually during an evening or weekend, that provides stakeholders the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, react to what is being proposed, and even make suggestions to the technical experts staffing the event. While the guests have the opportunity to mill around going back and forth between displays and familiarizing themselves with the various facets of the proposals, the Open House is also productive in getting stakeholders' viewpoints and perceptions communicated to the professionals. It is designed to be low-key and dialogue-oriented.

A public "**Forum**" is designed to air certain issues, to hear different points of view expressed, to shed light on a subject, but not to make any decisions. A Forum can play a very constructive role in bringing out the views and perceptions of various interests, and in exposing all of the interests to each other's views.

Blending the techniques

Open House design can be adapted to provide a mini-Forum component. For example, an Open House running from 7:00 to 8:30 or 9:00 p.m. could set aside the middle 30-45 minutes for a Forum. It can be a simple but structured way to provide time for public venting of opinions and concerns to project leaders (which might be very important to some stakeholders), while preserving the strengths of the open house opportunity. Project leaders should consider overall project objectives and local/cultural values when considering this approach.

How to do it

1. Have people sign up on cards to speak (providing their name, city, and affiliation).
 2. A moderator will take cards at random from the stack (so there are no preferences in the speaking order) and call on speakers. Both the next speaker and the "on deck" speaker are called, so that each is alerted to collect their thoughts and be ready.
 3. Every speaker will have the same preset time limit (e.g., 3 minutes), so that everyone gets a chance to speak. Calculate the limit based on the number of speakers and total available time. Use a flashcard to let speakers know their time is running out.
 4. Written comments can be submitted that night or later, whether or not people chose to speak; announcement deadline and provide plenty of comment forms.
 5. After the Forum is adjourned, everyone can return to one-on-one interactions at the open house information stations. Microphones and other forum equipment and furniture should be unplugged and removed immediately (packed up or otherwise placed beyond access).
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Sources

Citizen Participation Handbook by Hans and AnneMarie Bleiker, Seventh Edition, Institute for Participatory Management and Planning, 1993.

Public hearing technique used by Roger Williams, Minnesota Office of Dispute Resolution.

Savage Fen Management Plan

TIPS FOR STAFFING OPEN HOUSE STATIONS

The two purposes of an open house are to provide information and to collect feedback on a specific project or venture. Visitors are likely to include many people who have very limited knowledge of the topic and very limited access to information sources. Therefore, you can give the greatest assistance to visitors if you provide basic information and focused discussion to help them understand the Savage Fen wetland complex and the management issues for the plan under development.

Room Set-Up

The room will be set up to spread visitors out and to give them a variety of staff to talk with. It also gives many opportunities to those who want to deliver messages before they can listen.

There will not be a single, formal presentation. An open house is an informal setting for information-sharing.

We will have one or two "hosts" to greet visitors, explain the format, and guide them into the room.

Chairs will be provided for you during slow periods, but you will be more effective if you stand up while talking with visitors; being in front of the table would be better yet.

"Workday casual" clothing is recommended, if you can manage it with your schedule. Again, the idea is to make yourself as friendly and accessible as possible.

At the stations

Prepare your thoughts in advance. Think about how you best can help visitors learn about the project and become informed citizens and community leaders.

Be friendly, but be attentive to how they respond. Sometimes folks who are intensely disturbed about an issue will interpret a sunny disposition as flippancy about their concerns.

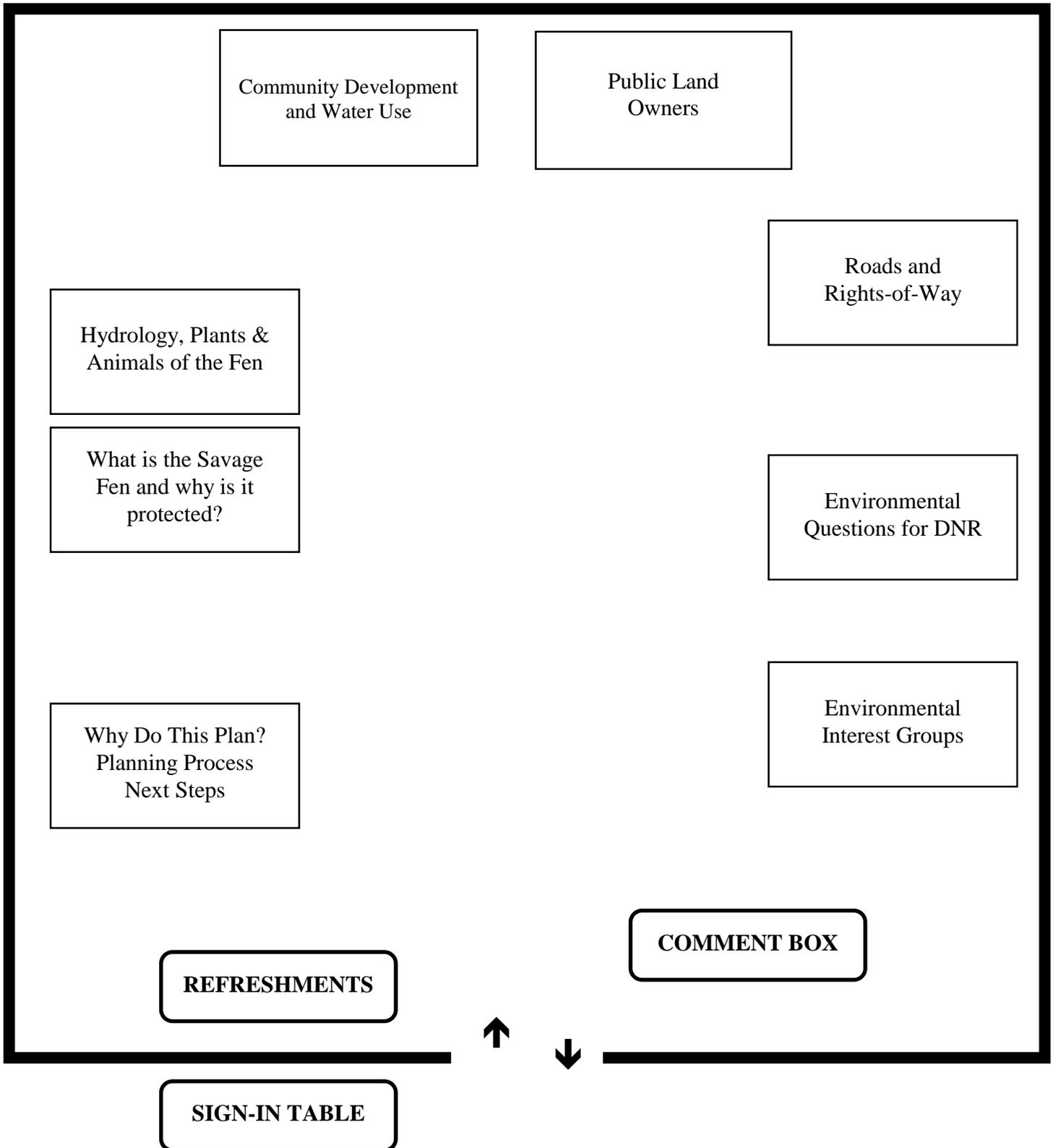
Show folks that you are actively listening and want to give them the information they need. If you do not have the information, help them get to someone who does. It may be necessary sometimes just to listen.

Please prepare a 1-2 page fact sheet on your topic and bring 100 copies for visitors to pick up and take home. A simple Q&A format will probably be the easiest for visitors to read quickly. Please include the name of the author organization, a contact name and phone number in case of follow-up questions, and the date it was prepared.

Keep your handouts and discussions focused on the Savage Fen wetland complex, because that is the topic for the evening. Issues at a larger or more general scale (such as metro-area transportation policy, urban sprawl, general water management, and so forth) probably will confuse visitors if you do not concentrate on the specifics of the Savage Fen site.

Maps and graphics can be very helpful. Visual information can be absorbed more quickly than written information. Take reasonable steps to ensure that the information is presented in a sound and accurate manner and indicate the author and data sources, as applicable.

Open House Map
Savage Fen Open House
November 19, 1997, 6:00 - 8:00 PM



**Welcome to the Savage Fen Open House
November 19, 1997, 6:00 - 8:00 PM**

STAFF ARE HERE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH INFORMATION AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

PLANNING PROCESS STAFF can talk with you about:

- Purpose and need for this resource management plan.
- Regulatory context for the Savage Fen wetland complex.
- Plan development and decision-making processes and schedule.
- How you can participate.

ECOLOGISTS and BOTANISTS can talk with you about:

- Plant and animal communities in the fen and the wetland complex as a whole.
- Threatened and special concern species.
- Potential impacts from land and groundwater development activities.

HYDROLOGISTS can talk with you about:

- Groundwater aquifer systems in the southwest metro that support the Savage Fen.
- Surface water system of the Savage Fen.
- Potential impacts from land and groundwater development activities.

CITY STAFF can talk with you about:

- Current and projected growth.
- Current and planned needs for water supply, transportation, and other urban services.
- Local strategies for stormwater management and groundwater withdrawals.

PUBLIC LAND OWNERS can talk with you about:

- The DNR's Scientific and Natural Areas in the wetland complex.
- Public land management activities in the Savage Fen wetland complex.
- Opportunities with private landowners for cooperative activities or voluntary acquisition.

DNR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STAFF can talk with you about:

- Why calcareous fens are important.
- Concerns about impacts to the fen from land use activities and groundwater drawdowns.

ENVIRONMENTAL INTEREST GROUPS can talk with you about:

- Why calcareous fens are important.
- Benefits of having the Savage Fen in the community.
- Concerns about impacts to the fen and the need for citizen support of the fen.

HIGHWAY and UTILITIES STAFF can talk with you about:

- Proposed County State Aid Highway 27 (CSAH 27) road project.
- Pipelines and electric utilities in the vicinity of the Savage Fen.

By Elizabeth Carlson - MN DNR

MAIL-IN MAPS: PLANNING WITHOUT MEETING

The Homework Technique

How often have you wondered, “why don’t more people come to my meeting?” Well, after a long day at work, how often have you gone to a public meeting (if it wasn’t related to your job)?

This technique recognizes people are busy. They have lots of demands on their time and lots of things they’d like to do. And maybe they really don’t understand why they should be concerned about your project or that they can contribute in any meaningful way.

Find some kind of exercise people can do at home and mail in (or e-mail) – an exercise that will allow them to give you USEFUL information. Design it to meet your public participation objectives. Know how you’ll use the information. Make it easy, clear, and, if possible, fun... or at least intriguing. A good homework exercise will clarify why people should care about your process, what’s at stake, and that they can contribute.

Maggie Creighton’s Mail-In Maps

Maggie Creighton of the firm Creighton and Creighton (web site below) used a simple map and stickers to get members of a community involved in their neighborhood development. The homework exercise was almost like a game, simple and fun. It was clear what the project was about. Not only did 60 people mail it back in, but it inspired another 65 to come to the workshop, when there had previously been little presentation. More information is on the attached description from the Creightons’ newsletter.

Note, to make sure the neighborhood took the mail-in maps seriously, the city arranged to have them hand delivered!

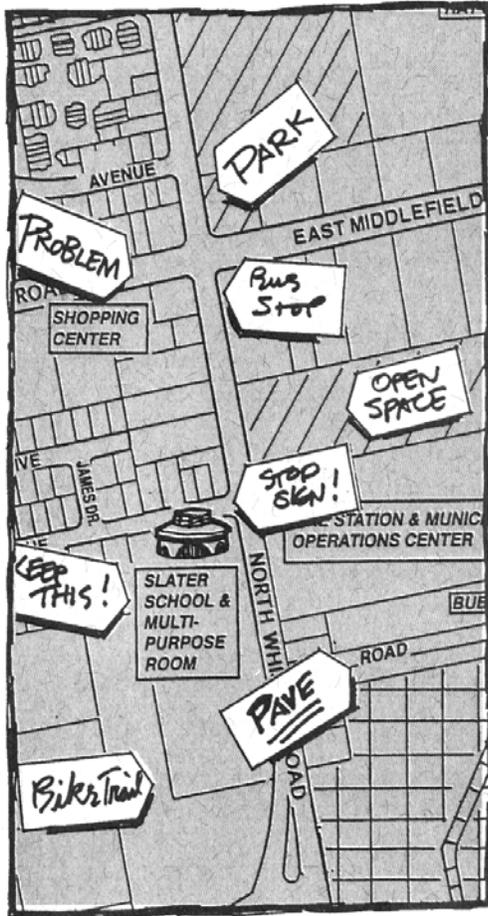
The Morals of This Tale

- **Involving the public doesn’t always mean meetings.** Make giving input easy.
- Be creative; don’t be afraid to be fun. There are formats other than long bureaucratic surveys for written input.
- Getting them started at home can entice people to get more involved.
- Sometimes you have to take the extra step or try something new to get people into your process.

CITIZENS MAIL-IN MAPS SHOW NEEDED

CHANGES IN NEIGHBORHOOD

The **City of Mountain View (California) Community Development Department** had a problem. It wanted to pay attention to a part of the town which didn't have much sense of community. The neighborhood included a mix of industrial development, apartment complexes, and moderate-income housing. The city knew the neighborhood hadn't received as much attention as other parts of the rapidly developing community, but when it tried to involve people through ordinary public hearings, there was little participation.



Maggie Cieghton worked with city staff to develop a mailer that challenged residents with the message: *“You can shape the future of your neighborhood!”* Inside the mailer was a map of the neighborhood, along with stickers with words like “Problem,” “Park,” “Traffic,” “Walking Path” which permitted residents to put a sticker on the map to show where there was a problem or where a desired facility would go. The mailer invited people to mail in the completed map or bring the map to a community workshop held on a Saturday morning. The city made arrangements so that the mailer was hand-delivered to 4,000 residents in the neighborhood.

More than 60 people mailed in their maps, and another 65 attended the community workshop. At the workshop participants transferred their arrows from the flyer to large wall-sized maps where they could use larger arrows. They met in small teams to discuss their comments. Then they expressed support or opposition to each other's ideas by applying color-coded dots to each other's arrows.

Members of the Mountain View Planning Commission participated in the discussion and were so pleased with the level of involvement that they would like to hold similar workshops in other parts of the community.

From the newsletter of Jim and Maggie Creighton: <http://www.creightonandcreighton.com>

SWITCHING BOATS IN MID-STREAM

The Small Group and the Anti-Small Group

Small group discussions offer more informal settings and opportunities for dialog than large groups or formal hearings. A well-designed process and good facilitator can help a small group of people express itself. Small groups tend to be more “user-friendly” and less intimidating than standard meetings, particularly to people who are nervous speaking publicly. Usually more people express their opinions and ask questions than at formal meetings.

But, in small groups, you cannot talk to everyone in the community at once. Nor can you hear what everyone else in your community thinks. Because of this, when trust is low, members of a community may see breaking into small groups as a ruse to “divide and conquer.” They believe you are preventing them from addressing the entire community in order to decrease their power and effectiveness.

The Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW) Discussions -- 1996

Meetings across the state included facilitated small group discussions about what criteria should be used to list waters as “outstanding resource waters,” the highest protection under law. ORW listings can greatly affect the approval or denial of permits for facilities.

In north central Wisconsin, trust of the DNR was low because of the ongoing permit decisions about a proposed metallic mine. DNR had used open houses on the mining issue, which members of community advocacy groups saw as a divide-and-conquer strategy. Thus, we anticipated people in that part of the state might object to being broken into small groups.

And, indeed, at the start of the meeting, participants complained about being divided up into groups. Each said he/she preferred a large group and understood that would decrease significantly the average time each had to talk. The facilitator called for a 10-minute coffee break, using the time to reconfigure. After the break, the meeting continued as a facilitated large-group discussion. The meeting only ran 30 minutes longer due to the large-group format.

Participants appreciated the staff’s flexibility and willingness to change plans, mid-stream. Subsequently, participants seemed to believe us to be more sincere and trustworthy.

The Morals of This Tale

- Anticipate community needs and contingencies. Consider the recent history of issues in the community as you make your plans. Listen to the noise.
- Be flexible. Remember, participation processes must meet the community’s needs as well as your own. It’s their meeting.
- Core Value #3: The public participation process communicates the interests and meets the process needs of participants.
- Core Value #5: The public participation process involves participants in defining how they participate.

From Mary Hamel, Wisconsin DNR