

Creative Approaches to Public Participation

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ILG

About ILG

- Promote good government at the local level.
- Provide practical, impartial and easy-to-use resources.



Civic vs. Public Engagement

– Civic engagement

- Residents engaging themselves in civic and political life of their community.

– Public Engagement

- Members of the public become more informed about and/or influence public decisions.

Types of Public Engagement

- Public information
 - One-way information to the general community or targeted groups
 - City of Chula Vista created a Facebook page for Chula Vista Clean promoting regional sustainability events and opportunities
 - City of Santa Clarita hosts a series of annual events to highlight and promote sustainability such as Bike to Work Day and the Household Hazardous Waste and E-Waste Round Ups
 - Other examples include: website content, mailer, community presentations, workshops and conferences

Types of Public Engagement

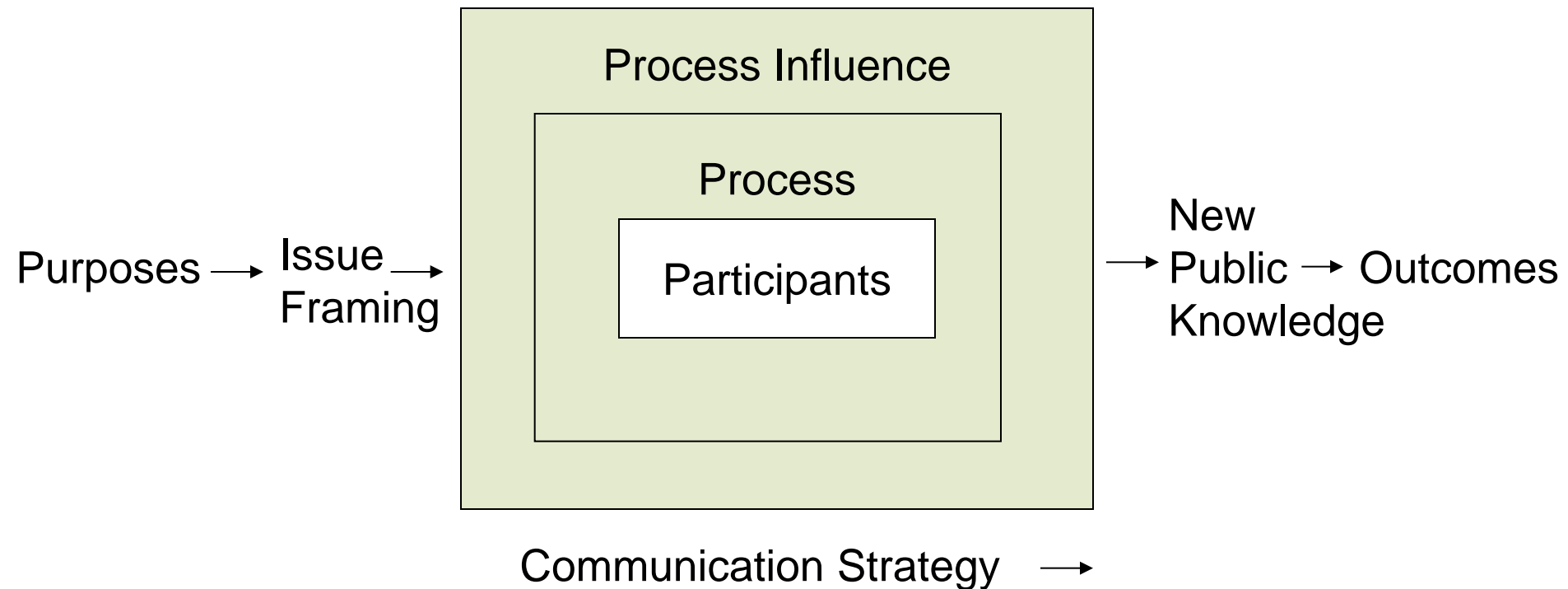
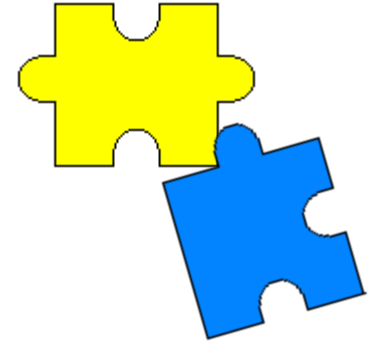
- Public consultation
 - Offers opportunities for individual opinions or feedback on an issue
 - Benicia surveyed businesses to understand attitudes related to climate change when developing its Sustainable Business Management Program
 - Beaumont offers residents with the opportunity to share their thoughts through a "sustainability survey" that is offered on the city's website.
 - Other examples include: public meetings and hearings, council or board comment periods

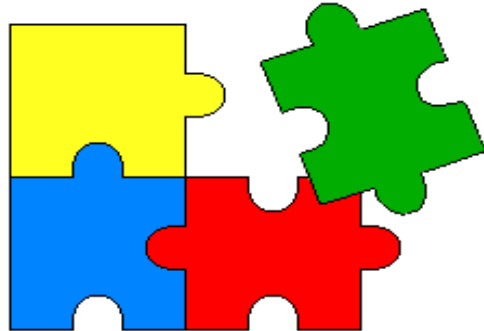
Types of Public Engagement

- Public deliberation

- Community members participate together in give and take discussions to develop recommendations or actions for the local agency to consider
- Manhattan Beach established a nineteen member task force of residents and city officials to develop recommendations to address a range of environmental challenges
- Union City established its Climate Protection Task Force to review and provide feedback on the City's CAP and to help monitor and assess plan implementation.
- Other examples include: commissions, committees, and sub committees

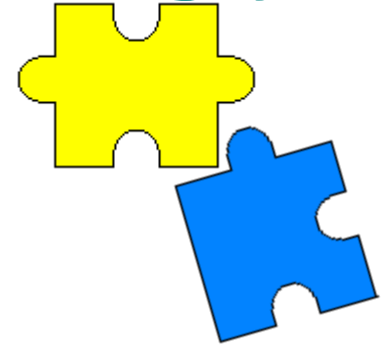
Public Engagement Flow Chart





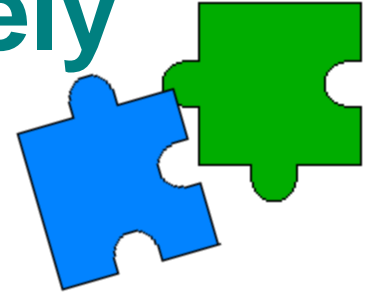
Purpose: To develop your capacity to design and implement public engagement processes with the greatest chance of success when there are strongly contested views and values.

Participants May Have Strongly Held Views About:



- The topics to be discussed
- The local agency and officials involved and/or
- The planning and/or public engagement process(es)

Think About Your Likely Participants



- What are possible individual and/or group concerns and interests?
- How may they view an opportunity for public engagement?
- Are there assumptions/gaps in information?
- What are their past experiences in other settings?

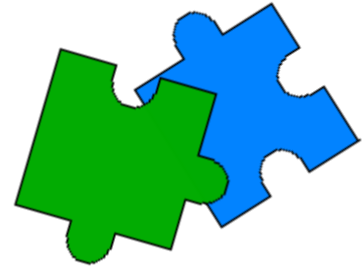
Plan, Prepare, and Provide Information



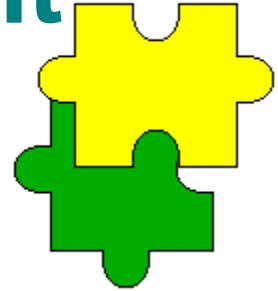
- Offer opportunities for early process input and co-sponsorship
- Strive for speakers and participants to reflect diverse population & viewpoints
- Endure sponsor and facilitator clarity about meeting process & strategy
- Plan for/prepare impartial mtg. facilitators
- “Watch your language”
- Prepare for “What if...”

Design an Appropriate Process

- Design in flexibility (have a “plan B”)
- Provide info & opportunities for learning
- Acknowledge underlying “policy” history, assumptions, restrictions on actions
- Meet reasonable process needs/interests of those likely to attend (time for questions)
- Consider processes that seek common ground – but allow adequate time
- Focus on a do-able work



Manage Public Engagement Meetings Transparently



- Describe meeting goals, process, documentation, and what happens next
- Seek agreement on meeting ground rules (or “courtesy guidelines”)
- Clarify how questions and/or comments will be handled – and comments documented
- Allow “none of the above” responses
- Show respect, impartiality & good listening

Responding to Negative, Challenging or Emotionally Presented Comments



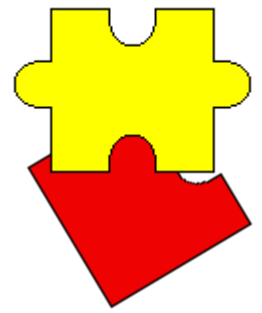
- Remain calm and actively listen
- Identify and respond to the substance of the comment rather than to its tone
- Keep in mind *ALDDD* (Acknowledge, Legitimate, Defer, Delegate or Deal)
- Ask for more explanation (as appropriate)
- Intervene if personal verbal attacks are made

Responding to Negative, Challenging or Emotionally Presented Comments (cont.)



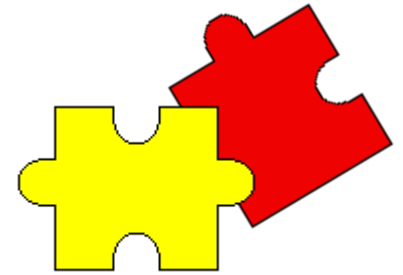
- If appropriate, ask the group for guidance
- Suggest a short break, and, as appropriate, speak to an individual about his or her inappropriate language or interactions
- Be aware that people who do not feel heard are likely to speak loudest

Take Steps if Participant Behavior is Disruptive



- Review and enforce meeting ground rules
- Maintain control of the microphone
- Ask group whether they wish to continue -or move to another format or process
- Move to “back-up” meeting process
- Ask disorderly participants to leave
- State next steps; conclude the meeting

Keys to Consider



- Learn from others
- Think about your likely participants
- Ensure clarity among sponsors/facilitator
- Inform and include
- Practice transparency
- Fit the process to the participants
- Prepare for “what if...”

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