

Engagement Strategies and Best Practises

The following list will provide some examples of engagement strategies appropriate to different levels of involvement.

Goal: Educate & Inform

- Web site or other web based tools. Reaches people who don't come to meetings. Creates an information repository available anywhere and anytime with an Internet connection. Reaches people across large geographic areas.
- Offering a central information contact. This is a designated person who serves as a single point-of-contact for inquires about the project. Provides reliable access for interested parties to get information and have questions answered.
- Briefings – presentations to organized groups to raise awareness, share information, answer questions and generate greater interest in participation. Effective early in the process to create awareness, build rapport and trust.
- Fact sheets, progress reports, newsletters, email updates
- Open houses
- Fairs and events
- Information repositories/kiosks (i.e. information provided at library sites, shopping malls – places that are convenient for community access) Provides access to project background materials and ensures that project materials are available for interested parties.

Goal: Consult

- Invite public comment (comment cards, encourage correspondance)
- Focus groups
- Delphi Processes – participants respond to a questionnaire or survey, responses are compiled and the compilation is returned to participants who have opportunity to add or alter their responses. The process is repeated until additional interaction no longer results in significant changes. Provides an opportunity to develop agreement without the need for face to face meetings.
- Surveys – online, print, other
- Public meetings/symposia – including presentation of facts and specifics of which aspects of the project/decision to which we can invite input
- Feedback registers – randomly selected participants are sent briefing materials and asked to provide feedback by a specific date/method (i.e. by telephone, one week later) Can be used as a recruiting mechanism to identify parties interested in further involvement.
- Interviews (would require a scripted and planned approach to ensure consistent approach)

Goal: Involve

- Workshops (where participants work in small groups on defined assignments)
- Computer assisted processes (i.e Expert Choice Decision support software)
- World Café
- Open space meetings (participants create and design their own agenda and work groups around a specific theme)
- Focused conversations – allows for group involvement in a structured discussion on specific issues - can be used to explore potentially contentious issues. Conversation/questions take four stages:
 - Objective – review facts
 - Reflective – review emotional response
 - Interpretive – review meaning
 - Decisional – consider future action.

Goal: Collaborate

- Advisory committees
- Consensus-building activities (working through options/solutions to find common ground or agreement)
- Deliberative Forums - bring people together to make choices about difficult, complex issues where there is a lot of uncertainty about solutions and there is high likelihood that people will be polarized on the issue. The goal of deliberative forums is to find where there is common ground for action. A moderator who is specifically trained in this technique is important.
- Deliberative polling – structured means to measure informed opinion on an issue. Process requires a statistically valid sample group and incorporates information presentation so that participants can offer informed opinions. Group discussion takes place and then participants vote on the questions put before them.

Goal: Empowerment

- Citizen jury – a representational group of participants is selected to consider a set of facts and relevant information leading to a decision.
- Voting by ballot – options are put to a vote the results of which are binding.
- Delegated stakeholder decision-making – final decision-making authority, leading to action is assigned to a committee (ad hoc, standing) or other organized body (project-related work group or task