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**Section 2.6 – Human Services**

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**POLICY 2.6.3 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION****OBJECTIVE**

To outline the City's commitment to actively involve the community in Council's planning, development and service delivery activities.

**STATEMENT**

The City has a stated objective to enhance the capacity of the community to actively participate in decision-making and strategic direction setting.

The City is committed to improving its public participation practices. The City recognises that this will require:

- adequate resourcing;
- in-house and external training;
- the establishment of best practice public participation mechanisms; and
- a program of review to evaluate public participation processes.

The City will develop a Public Participation Strategy which will address:

- the identification of issues requiring public participation;
- the inclusion in the annual budget process of funding for public participation activities;
- increasing staff awareness and skills in public participation techniques;
- how all sectors and groups within the community can have the opportunity to participate in the City's activities; and
- a community education program relating to public participation in the City's affairs.

**Definitions**

*Public participation* – can be defined as:

The provision of opportunities for the public to be involved in a range of issues affecting their communities and lifestyles. Such opportunities would enable the public to provide information, ideas and opinions on plans, proposals, policies and services; partner the City in working towards specific objectives; or actively contribute to physical works (eg. Environmental projects.)

While public participation can include the following elements it is far more than:

- Public consultation
  - Public relations
  - Information dissemination
  - conflict resolution.
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## Section 2.6 – Human Services

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### **Budget**

Where a specific public participation program relates to a budgeted item or City proposal, the costs of the participation program will be met from the budget concerned.

Where a specific public participation program relates to an independent proponent's proposal, the cost of the public participation program will be met by the proponent.

### **Reporting and review**

The City's Public Participation activities will be reviewed in relation to specified performance measures which include:

- level of public knowledge regarding opportunities to participate;
- level of public satisfaction with the opportunity to participate; and
- range of public participation projects undertaken throughout the organisation.

In order to provide the community with summary information regarding the City's public participation program, the review will be reported on in the City's Annual Report in accordance with statutory requirements and Council's Strategic Direction.

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Previous Policy No:	N/A
Amendments:	CJ213-06/99
Issued:	July 1999
Related Documentation:	

**ISSUES RAISED ON THE DRAFT COMMUNITY CONSULATION POLICY & ASSOCIATED GUIDELINES**

NAME	Comments on draft Policy	Comments on Handbook	Other comments
Mr Ron de Gruchy	It is a matter of concern that the Public Participation Policy is being replaced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lengthy and not easy to understand</li> <li>– The matrix does not reflect the input of community participants at the workshop</li> </ul>	“Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success” which was distributed by the State Government is more relevant
Ms Lyn Chilby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The draft policy does not give an indication as to who “the public” would be.</li> <li>– Using plain simple understandable language would be of benefit to all</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The handbook should be available for use for both staff and the community</li> </ul>	
Mr Dave Biron	The current policy is far more forward thinking	The framework for the handbook should be under the existing policy	
Ms Helen Kraus	Retain the Public Participation Policy		Adopt Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success and Resource Guide (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)
South Ward Ratepayers & Electors Association Inc	Support the retention of the current Policy 2.6.3 – Public participation	Handbook should be available to all participants within the City	Adopt Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success and Resource Guide (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)
Ms Marilyn Zakrevsky	Do not support the replacement of the current policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Handbook is too prescriptive</li> <li>– The matrix does not reflect the input of community participants at the workshop</li> </ul>	Adopt Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success and Resource Guide (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)

<b>NAME</b>	<b>Comments on draft Policy</b>	<b>Comments on Handbook</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
Mr V K Zakrevsky	Do not support the replacement of the current policy	The matrix does not reflect the input of community participants at the workshop	Adopt Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success and Resource Guide (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)
Ms Marie Macdonald	Current policy should not be removed	– The matrix does not reflect the input of community participants at the workshop	Adopt Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success and Resource Guide (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)
Mr Alyn Bryant	Essential that the Council maintain personalized consultation with the community	A well compiled handbook	Community consultation should be a priority on all matters affecting the public.
Ms Mnique Moon	Current participation need to be retained		Adopt Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success and Resource Guide (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)
Elected Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Public Participation Policy should be retained</li> <li>– Public Participation Policy to be amended to encapsulate Consulting Citizens</li> </ul>	– Do not adopt the City's handbook for staff use	Adopt Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success and Resource Guide (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)



# Consulting Citizens:

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

JUNE 2003



Department of the  
Premier and Cabinet  
Citizens and Civics Unit

## The Purpose of this Guide

The Citizens and Civics Unit has produced this handbook as a companion guide to *Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide* (the 'blue' guide) to provide more in-depth information to help you to plan your next public participation exercise.

We suggest that you read the 'blue' guide first as that provides a useful broad brush view of consulting the public. This 'red' guide directs its focus towards those elements of planning that are essential in the creation of effective and meaningful consultations. In particular, it includes material to assist you in minimising risk – both project risk and during the consultation process itself.

Like the introductory guide, *Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success* was developed in a consultative manner drawing on the experience and input of government departments, non-government organisations and individuals.

Readers and practitioners are invited to offer comments and suggestions. To provide feedback please contact the Citizens and Civics Unit via email on [bacitizen@dpc.wa.gov.au](mailto:bacitizen@dpc.wa.gov.au) or in writing to:

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the Citizens and Civics Unit's homepage:  
<http://www.ccu.dpc.wa.gov.au>*

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## Introduction

Public participation exercises do require time, effort and commitment but are more than worth the energy expended.

The purpose of this guide is to help people plan public participation programs appropriate to issues and objectives.

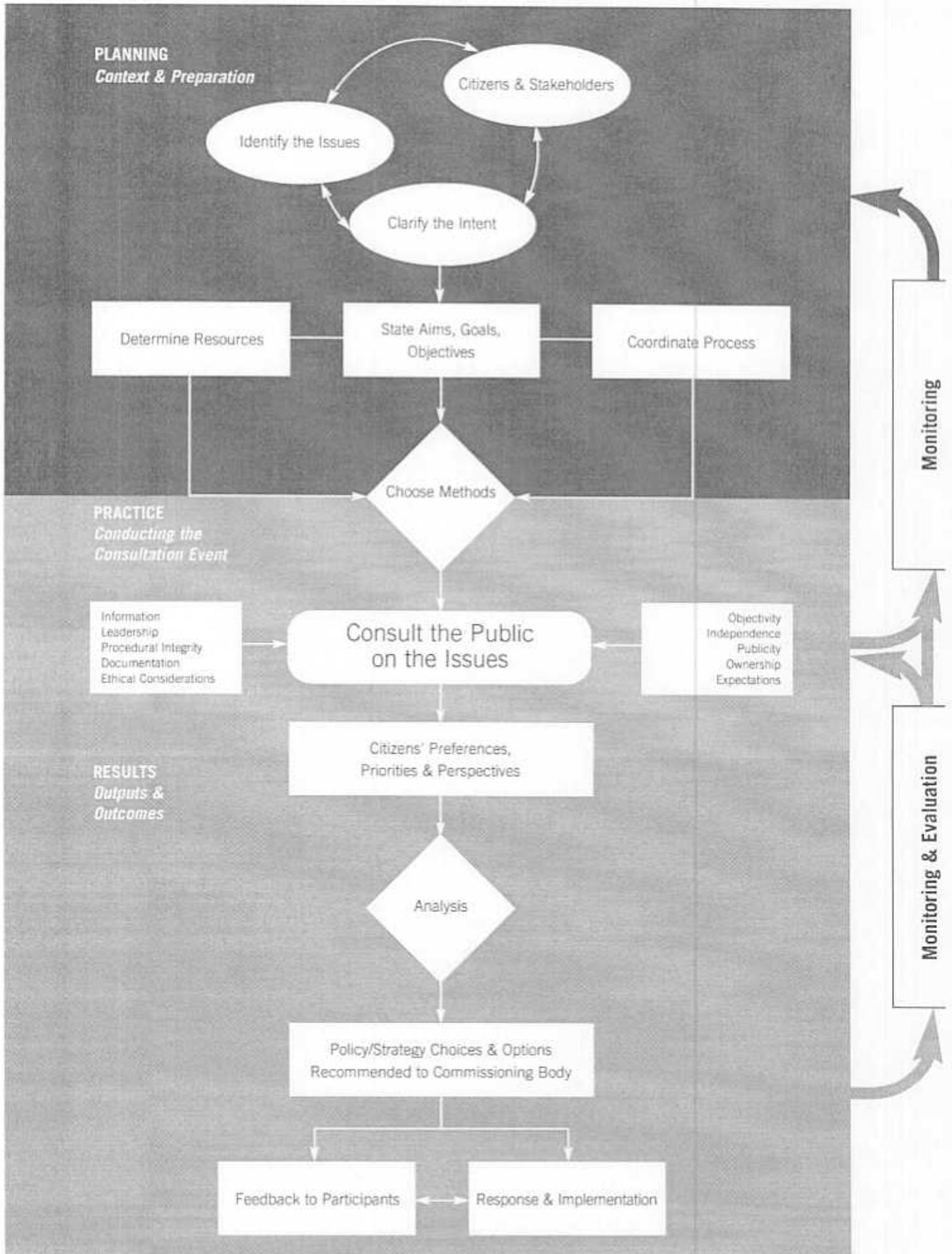
The guide is not prescriptive – there is no one method more appropriate than another and in some instances some methods may need to be adapted to your particular circumstances. There are however some factors in public participation that are common to all exercises and need to be addressed each and every time you plan a project.

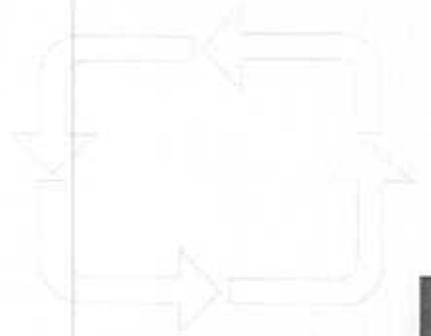
Although this guide presents information in a sequential format you will find that planning public participation exercises is not so linear. While you are clarifying the issue, for example, you will need to be thinking about who to involve, what budgetary and resource constraints you may have, how much time is available, how a decision will be made, and so on.

It is also important for the project team to be given the time throughout the planning stage to reflect. It is only through ongoing reflection that you will develop your expertise, competence and confidence in both planning and conducting public participation exercises.

We are not offering you a fail-safe guidebook to consultation. Rather we aim to establish the structure and guiding principles through which you can plan your own public participation exercise pertinent to your needs.

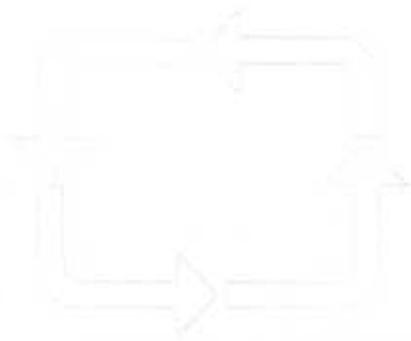
Figure 1: Planning the Consultation





## Overview





## A Culture of Consultation

The Western Australian Government strongly promotes increased community involvement in decision-making. Involving the public is a 'must do' activity in Western Australia, as it is across the world. There is a simple reason for this – **public participation works**.

Building an effective public participation strategy begins long before first contact with the public. To achieve *meaningful* benefits from public participation there must be a real commitment across the organisation to the process. That is, you need to develop a *culture of consultation*.

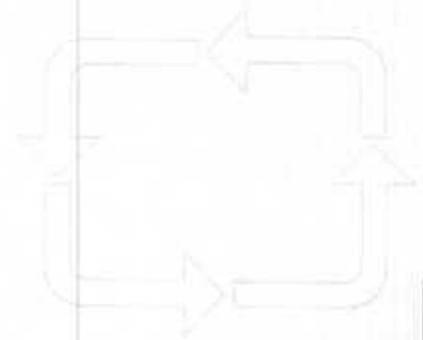
Building commitment within large and small organisations can be supported through highlighting the substantial benefits that flow from involving citizens and stakeholders in the development and implementation of policy.

Developing a *culture of consultation* within your organisation will go a long way towards the development of successful public participation strategies. Involving the public needs to be a "taken-for-granted" assumption of the way things are done in your organisation.

Peters and Waterman (1982) have developed a useful framework (the 7S framework) highlighting seven elements within organisations where a culture of consultation can be enhanced. These are:

- 1. Shared Values:** Shared values pull an organisation together in striving for common goals. The development of a set of shared values may require challenging procedures and behaviours that have been accepted as the status quo for years.
- 2. Strategy:** Developing a course of action that both anticipates and responds to changes external to the organisation. In respect of developing a *culture of consultation* in your organisation it means identifying "where you are now" and "where you want to be".
- 3. Structure:** A culture of consultation can be promoted if your own organisation practices consultation internally and encourages input from all levels of the organisation.





**4. Skills:** These refer to your organisation's key attributes or capabilities - the practical skills of your staff accompanied by an attitude or mind-set committed to consulting the public on important community issues.

**5. Staff:** The challenge for organisations is how to make use of and to develop a team of motivated, committed and skilled practitioners.

**6. Systems:** The formal and informal procedures and routine processes guiding your organisation and making the best use of individual talents and skills.

**7. Style:** Actions are more decisive than words. People may listen to what managers say, but they believe what managers do. Senior staff must show their own enthusiasm towards the practice of consultation – with both their own staff and the public.

**The benefits of public involvement include:**

- Long term financial savings to the organising agency
- Increased user satisfaction in services
- Increased likelihood of policy/program acceptance
- Reduced conflict
- Improved relationships with citizens
- Improved public image
- Stronger communities
- Reinforced legitimacy in the decision-making process
- Actual or potential problems revealed
- Increased citizenship capacity



## Before you start



Before you get involved in the process of planning your public participation exercise it is important to **STOP** and think about why you want to consult.

The failure of many consultations can often be traced back to a lack of clarity. Before going any further with your planning take the time to reflect and ask yourself:

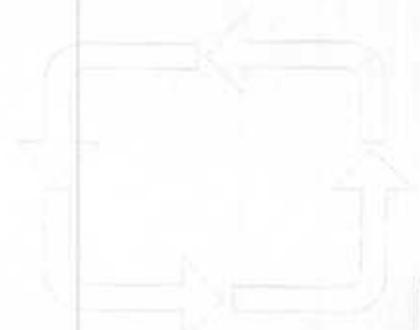
- Why are we planning a public participation exercise for this issue?
- Are the parameters of the issue clearly defined and able to be articulated to all who will participate?
- Are we clear about what is negotiable and what is not?
- What is the impetus and drivers of the issue and of the consultation?
- What do we hope to achieve through public participation?
- What is the decision being made?
- Who will make the decision?
- What will be done with the information gathered?
- How much influence will the public have on the final decision and what role will they play in the decision-making process?

Your public participation exercise can only be truly successful if you have a genuine and clear understanding of the answers to these questions.

**Now** it is time to plan for public participation.



*Often decisions need to be made quickly, with limited resources. Time spent planning should not be seen as time wasted but rather is an opportunity to ascertain whether your goals are realistic and if your technique fits your objectives.*



## Reflective Practice

Developing a commitment towards consulting the public whenever possible is the first step in planning participation strategies.

A second, equally important factor is knowing that public involvement is a **process** of on-going learning - before, during and after the exercise.

Reflective practice requires that you:

### PLAN

- Identify what you hope to achieve
- Be clear about why you are consulting in the first place
- Set objectives
- Identify success factors
- Plan steps
- Create evaluation criteria
- Identify stakeholders or citizens

### DO

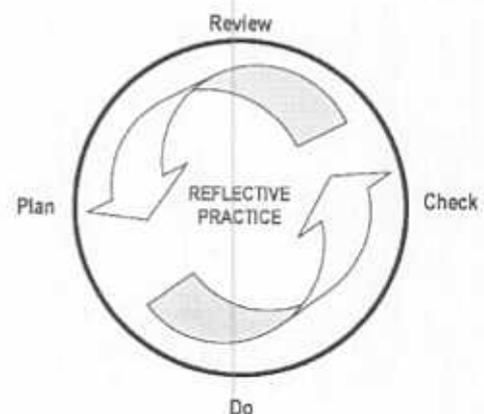
- Implement the plan

### CHECK

- Monitor progress against defined objectives

### REVIEW

- Evaluate achievements and overall effectiveness
- Identify reasons for success (or not)
- Assess implications for future plans
- Adapt
- Plan



Planning that incorporates reflective practice requires flexibility, innovation and sometimes experimentation. As your plan develops you need to continually ask yourself 'what', 'how' and 'who' questions:

- What is working?
- What is not working and why not?
- What might happen if we take this course of action?
- Who will benefit?
- What are my goals?
- Who are the interested parties?
- How can it be better?
- What does this tell me?

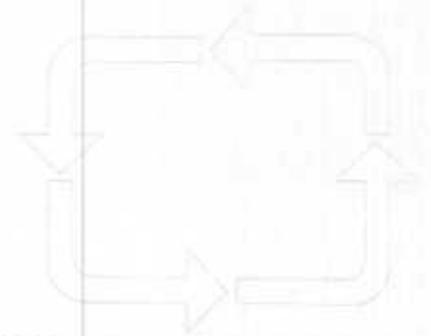
## Reflective Practice

Reflection throughout the process requires that you review where you've been and decide whether you are still heading in the right direction.

This may mean that where you were heading is not as appropriate as first thought and requires a change or redirection. It may mean a rethink of your objectives or of who best to involve. This is where **flexibility** and **adaptability** are of prime importance.

Reflecting on your consultation plan will help identify all key elements in the project and allow you to make adjustments as you go.

It is not necessarily about uncovering mistakes but in finding things out and generating new knowledge that can guide future action. It gives you an opportunity to say 'This won't work – let's fix it.' rather than persevering with what may turn out to be an ineffective plan.



# Risk Assessment and Risk Management





## Risk Assessment and Risk Management

You need to integrate public participation and risk management practice, applying the same risk assessment and risk management strategies to the public participation process as you would apply to any project your organisation is undertaking. Badly conducted consultations or ill-conceived public participation exercises can be worse than not having engaged with the community at all. They contribute to public cynicism and jeopardise future government-citizen partnerships. At a time when confidence in public institutions is waning, consultations provide one of the most effective mechanisms through which you can restore trust, gain respect and reduce risk.

Risk Management operates at more than one level.

### 1. Risk at the Project Level

At the level of the **project** public participation will form part of your risk management strategies. It is an opportunity to inform stakeholders and citizens on the complexities of the issue. However, consultation should not be seen as simply a forum for the transmission of purely technical information regarding risks or hazards - although this will certainly be one component of the exercise. There is also a non-technical or social side to risk management<sup>1</sup>.



Peter Sandman<sup>2</sup> sees risk as equal to the sum of the technical hazard posed by a situation, and the outrage that the situation generates.

$$\text{RISK} = \text{HAZARD} + \text{OUTRAGE}$$

From issues such as waste management to the provision of essential services, public policy decisions across government regularly have a high capacity to generate community reaction – which is often negative. This 'outrage' is seldom well understood by decision makers. Thus the social side of your risk management will need to address all aspects of the situation aside from the pure technical hazard. Understanding and managing the community reaction to the issue will need to address concerns of trustworthiness, honesty, control, openness, responsiveness, fairness and respect<sup>3</sup>.

A crucial aspect of your planning then is to understand how the community views the issue and how you view the issue. Although these two views may differ, each must be considered equally valid, and must be accommodated in the consultation itself. Peter Sandman<sup>4</sup> believes that in any consultation you must accept that "Emotions are legitimate – the public's and your own."

<sup>1</sup>The CCU is grateful to Futureye for its assistance with this section

<sup>2</sup>Sandman (1986)

<sup>3</sup>For more information see the work of Chess et al. (1988), Corvello (1992), Fischhoff et al. (1981), Sandman (1986)

<sup>4</sup>Holling (1996)

## 2. Risk at the Level of the Consultation Process

At the level of the public participation **process**, risk management is concerned with identifying and addressing potential risk factors associated with consultation. These risks, both technical and non-technical, can come from within your organisation and from without.

Some technical risks of consultation include:

- low participation or response rates
- poor quality responses
- participants not representative of the community
- cost and resource blow outs
- confusion between participants and organisers about the issue
- lack of consensus
- high dropout rate

Non-technical or social risks within your organisation can include:

- a lack of commitment to the consultation
- a reluctance to share all relevant information
- a perception of an ignorant or unconcerned public
- a low opinion of public ability to understand complex information
- inconsistent understanding of the objectives of the exercise

From outside of your organisation some social risks include:

- conflicting ideas from other departments or agencies
- public perceptions of your commitment and capacity to listen and respond
- issues of control

Each of these risk factors should be identified in the planning stage and throughout the public participation exercise itself in keeping with continued reflexive practice. It might be helpful to take note of these technical and social risks and make this available to all participants. That way you will demonstrate that you are genuine in your desire to engage with the community.

Attention to detail in the planning of your public participation project is likely to achieve not only better process outcomes but better policy outcomes.



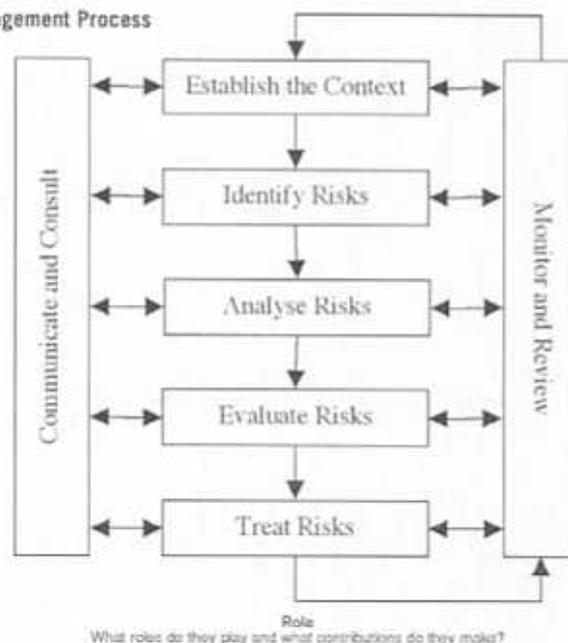
### *Risk Management*

*Debate on some issues can arouse strong anger and hostility. Effective facilitation can help diffuse anger and protect participants from distressing situations.*

## Risk Assessment and Risk Management

The *Australian/New Zealand Risk Management Standard* identifies the elements of the risk management process. The four elements outlined below can be applied to both technical and social risk factors.

Figure 2: The Risk Management Process



### 1. Establish Context

- Identify issue, stakeholders, objectives and resources (time and budget)

### 2. Identify Risks

- What potentially threatens the project?
- What potentially threatens the consultation?

### 3. Analyse and Evaluate Risks

- What is the likelihood of the risk?
- What is the level of impact?
- What risks are acceptable?
- What risks need to be closely monitored?
- What risks can be avoided by adapting the plan?

### 4. Treat Risks

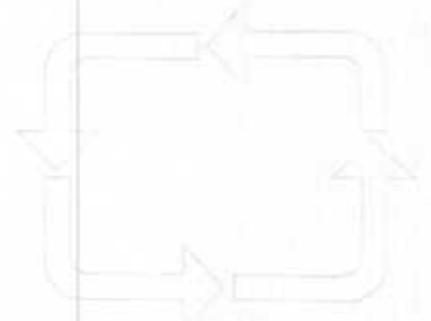
- Alter planning to reduce likelihood of risks occurring
- Develop alternative or contingency strategies in the event that the risk factor eventuates.



### *Why involve participants early?*

#### *Scarborough Senior High School Redevelopment Consultation*

*Despite the considerable effort to create a fair, transparent and accountable community consultation process, it was criticised by some at every stage. The key learning from this is the crucial importance of consultation with the community very early in the decision making process. Because the community was not involved from the outset in the decision to discontinue the school, the community became disenchanted, making future attempts at negotiation difficult.*



## Choosing your Method





## The Starting Point

Until recently it has sometimes seemed enough for government officials to identify an issue, organise a public display or meeting, and gather opinions before making a decision. For some issues and in some circumstances this may be appropriate.

**But there is a better way.**

Rather than choosing a method because you are familiar with it, because it has been used elsewhere or because it is "in", it is critical to choose public participation techniques and activities which are appropriate for your issue and objectives.

Each consultation plan will likely combine more than one mechanism or technique. Therefore one of the first steps in your planning process will be to clearly identify and define the issue.

### Identify the Issue

*Know the issue*

It is important that all involved, both participants and consulters, have knowledge and understanding of the issue under consideration. This may require involvement of the public in the planning stage so that different perspectives on the issue are taken into account with both consulters and consultees understanding each others views. It is crucial that the issue is identified from your perspective **and** from the perspective of critical stakeholders. Some methods for the early involvement of the public can be achieved through the establishment of Steering Groups, Planning Advisory Groups or Advisory Panels.

Getting to know the issue will require you to look both inside and outside your agency. For example within the agency you might need to determine how the exercise fits within the agency or department's agenda, the decision making process and so on. Outside analysis might include such things as media analysis, monitoring of community activity, the level of support and opposition to the exercise.



*Remember, planning public participation is not a linear process where you work through a series of 1-2-3 steps. While defining your issue you also need to be thinking about related issues such as your objective, stakeholder resources etc.*

Try using the **SWOT** guide for assessing the issue:

**Strengths**

The positive concepts surrounding the issue or decision on consultation and the benefits of the issue or decision.

**Weaknesses**

The negative consequences of implementing the proposed program or policy option.

**Opportunities**

The positive possibilities that may result from the consultation.

**Threats**

Obstacles that may arise, either during or after the consultation.



**Risk Management**

*A thorough understanding of the issue can save time and money by reducing repetition and enabling contingencies to be put in place to minimise risk.*

Further information should be gathered on:

**Drivers**

Issues emerge from different sources so it is important to identify from where these originate and what influence these will have on your public participation planning. For example public participation exercises driven by legislative drafting may differ from those which are being driven by stakeholders.

- Are the drivers internal or external?
- What is the underlying cause?

**History**

It is important to gain a comprehensive knowledge of all the factors relevant to the development of the issue.

- What other policy exists on this or related issues?
- Have the public been consulted on this or related issues?
- Have this group of stakeholders been consulted on this or related issues?
- What other areas of policy are impacted by this issue?

**Values / Ideology**

Remember that the public may have quite a different perspective on the issue and may ask "How will this affect me on a personal level?" Often the public will think in terms of values and priorities rather than technical options. Public focus will often be on the following values:

- Social impact
- Environmental impact
- Safety
- Cost

## The Starting Point

### Controversy

While it is not possible to predict controversy there are indicators that can help to gauge possible controversy, such as:

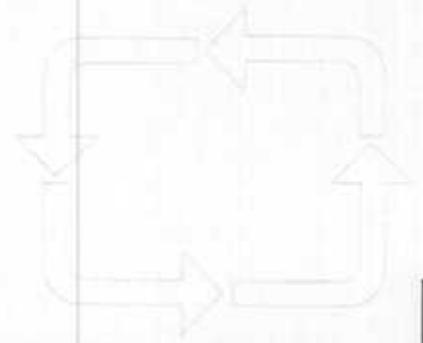
- The issue has significant impacts (eg political, social, economic etc)
- The issue is the sole reason for the existence of stakeholder groups
- There has been controversy on this or related issues



### *Narrowing the Issue*

#### *Scarborough High School Redevelopment May to July 2001*

*Consultation on the issue of the Scarborough High School Redevelopment was conducted in two stages. The first stage consisted of a Community Forum whereby approximately 80 participants were to develop between 3 – 5 options to take to the larger community for their vote in stage two. A survey which consulted 6000 people was then conducted.*



## Define the Issue

Writing a 1-2 sentence statement of the decision or issue under consideration is valuable. This process will bring the parameters of the issue into focus and ensure there is consensus between all those involved. Such a statement should not be too broad to be meaningless or too narrow to close off debate. **It should also clearly outline any constraints or 'givens' associated with the issue.**

The process of defining the issue may reveal that it is too large to be addressed within the time and resources available and may need to be broken into smaller, more manageable components.

### Time to Reflect

- Can we define the issue that needs to be addressed?
- Have any other consultations been carried out on this or similar issues?
- What threats and opportunities exist?
- Have we identified the potential benefits of involving the public?
- Do we understand the implications of **not** involving the public?
- Are we aware of support and opposition to the exercise?
- Have we clearly identified any issues that fall outside the process?
- Have we identified the constraints?
- Have we outlined what is available for negotiation, what is not?
- How controversial is the issue?
- Are there alternatives and how can these be incorporated?
- Have we identified potential risk factors?

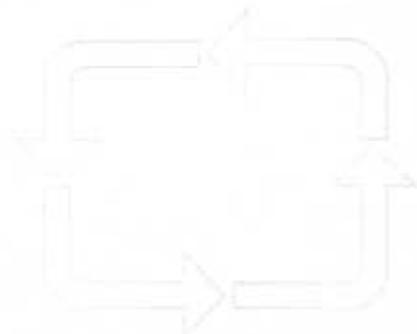


#### **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE:** Clear issue definition

#### **CALM:** Jurien Bay Marine Conservation Reserve Case Study

*The major difficulty was trying to accommodate the wide variety of concerns, expectations and understanding of the issues and the process of the advisory committee members. In addition the local community versus institutional divide presented some problems. Another major problem was that some representatives wanted to sort out contentious issues from a statewide perspective (ie 'big picture' first) before tackling the specifics within the Jurien context.*

*Source: CALM Handbook*



## Determine the Objective

Having a clear and well-defined objective is of paramount importance. Without it the chance of conducting a relevant and successful public participation exercise will be severely diminished.

Remember to keep asking yourself, *what do we want to achieve?*

For example, is the objective of the consultation to:

- Develop policy?
- Get feedback on policy?
- Make a decision between options?
- Gain consensus?
- Show a way forward?
- Discuss the issues?
- Resolve issues?
- Identify common ground?
- Provide information?



Remember that for any given objective, there are numerous strategies which could be implemented to achieve those ends, not all of which will be acceptable, credible, or productive from the point of view of critical stakeholders. As well as determining objectives, it is necessary to evaluate these against what stakeholders expect in order to determine the most effective strategies to achieve objectives.

Also vital is to determine what in the pursuit of these objectives is negotiable, and what is not – what aspects of a policy or proposal its proponents are willing to change as a result of the consultation process, and what aspects are non-negotiable. Such decisions also have a significant impact on levels of participation sought in the consultation process.

The objective you define should be **SMART**:

- **Specific**  
Is your objective clear and focussed? Have the parameters been set?
- **Measurable**  
Will your evaluation process show if the objective/s have been achieved?
- **Achievable**  
Can you achieve the objective with the time and resources available?
- **Realistic**  
Are you hoping for too much? For example, are you seeking consensus on an issue that may not be resolvable?
- **Timely**  
Have you set a realistic time frame for the process? Remember that public participation often requires more time than is allocated.

The objective/s of the public participation exercise should be clearly stated and agreed upon by all those involved, including the participants.



## Levels of Participation

There are numerous conceptual tools that can assist you in choosing your method by showing the links between levels of involvement, issue complexity, risk assessment and method selection. We have included some of the more widely used in the appendices – the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (Appendix Three), the Vroom-Yetton Decision Tree (Appendix Four) and Les Robinson's Public Participation Matrix (Appendix Five).

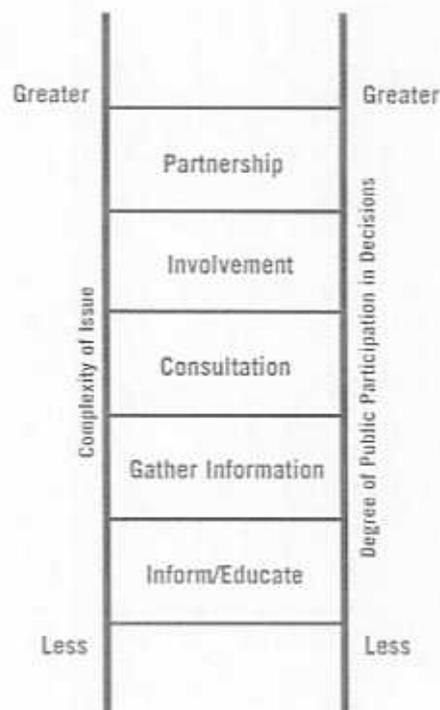
This guide utilises a 5-step ladder to represent the varying levels of public participation (Figure Three) and the Public Involvement Continuum (Figure Four) showing various public participation methods and where they are located on the continuum of public involvement.



*Risk Management: A clear objective communicated to all from the outset can help encourage participation, minimise disappointment and reduce the dropout rate.*

The objective of consultation will determine the level of involvement. Public participation exercises can be grouped into different levels of involvement.

Figure 3: Ladder of Public Participation Levels



As you will see in Figure 4 (page 22), there is overlap between the level of involvement and the method chosen, for example, all methods will involve elements of information provision. The following may be useful in identifying which level of involvement is right for your exercise.

**Inform/Educate** when:

- Factual information is needed to describe a policy, program or process
- A decision has already been made or no decision is required
- The public needs to know the results of the process
- There is no opportunity to influence the final outcome
- There is need for acceptance of a proposal or decision before a decision may be made
- An emergency or crisis requires immediate action
- Information is necessary to ease concerns or prepare for involvement
- The issue is relatively simple

**Gather information/views** when:

- The purpose is primarily to listen and gather information
- Policy decisions are still being shaped and discretion is required
- There may not be a firm commitment to do anything with the views collected

**Consult** when:

- A two-way information exchange is required
- Individuals and groups have an interest in the issue and will likely be affected by the outcome
- There is an opportunity to influence the final outcome
- Discussion among and with stakeholders is to be encouraged
- Input may shape policy directions/program delivery

**Involve** when:

- Citizens need to talk to each other regarding complex, value laden issues
- There is a capacity for citizens to shape policies and decisions that affect them
- There is opportunity for shared agenda setting and open time frames for deliberation on issues
- Options generated together will be respected

**Establish Partnerships** when:

- Empowering citizens and groups to manage the process is a goal
- Citizens and groups have accepted the challenge of being part of identifying the solutions themselves
- There is an agreement to implement solutions generated by citizens and groups

**Levels of Participation and Risk**

Different types of consultation carry different degrees of risk. A low level public participation exercise such as a questionnaire may carry less procedural risk (and therefore perhaps appear more attractive) but in the long term the public may not feel as if they were adequately consulted, and sufficient trust has not been developed.



*Appendix One provides examples of participation methods from the five levels with some relevant case studies. Other examples can be located on the Websites located in the rear of this guide.*

# Levels of Participation

Figure 4: Public Involvement Continuum<sup>5</sup>

	Level 1 Inform Educate	Level 2 Gather Information	Level 3 Consult	Level 4 Involve	Level 5 Partner
<b>High</b>					
<b>Citizen Engagement</b>					
Citizens Juries	•	•	•	•	•
Citizens Panels	•	•	•	•	•
Consensus Conference	•	•	•	•	•
Deliberative Opinion Polling	•	•	•	•	•
Search Conference	•	•	•	•	•
Study Groups	•	•	•	•	•
Sustainable Community Development	•	•	•	•	•
Charrette	•	•	•	•	
Representative Groups	•	•	•	•	
User Panels	•	•	•	•	
Round Tables	•	•	•	•	
<b>Consultation</b>					
Advisory Committees	•	•	•		
Computer Assisted Participation	•	•	•		
Interactive WWW/E-Conference	•	•	•		
Online Discussion Groups	•	•	•		
Focus Groups	•	•	•		
Workshops	•	•	•		
Community Or Public Meetings	•	•			
Parliamentary Committees	•	•			
People's Panel	•	•			
Polling	•	•			
Public Hearings	•	•			
Questionnaires and Surveys	•	•			
Workshops	•	•			
User Comments and Complaints	•	•			
<b>Communication:</b>					
Advertising	•				
Calls for submissions	•				
Fact Sheets	•				
Exhibitions	•				
Information Kits	•				
Mail outs	•				
Media Events	•				
<b>Low</b>					
Open Days	•				
Press Releases	•				
Site Visits	•				

<sup>5</sup> adapted from Health Canada, 2000, Policy Toolkit for Public Involvement in Decision Making

### Time to Reflect

- Do we fully understand the purpose of the consultation?
- Is there a strong link between our participation plan and defined objectives?
- Does the level of involvement fit our objectives?
- Are we flexible on our objectives? Or method?
- Will we allow participants some input in setting objectives?
- Have we identified potential risk factors?
- Have we identified constraints and communicated these honestly to participants?
- How will we know if we have been successful?

*Larger consultations may require the adoption of a series of methods.*

#### *Case Study: Department of Sport and Recreation*

*In developing their Strategic Directions 2003-2005 (SD3) the Department of Sport and Recreation conducted extensive consultations that included written public submissions, workshops and industry interviews with associated Government agencies and relevant community groups. From this consultation process the future directions and priorities for Sport and Recreation were identified.*

*SD3 Dept of Sport & Recreation*



## Identify Participants

While the term 'stakeholders' is often used as a generic term to describe all participants, a distinction needs to be made between forms of consultation which involve representative groups or stakeholders, and those involving citizens.

Interest group/stakeholder representatives are representing their group or organisation and therefore may be required to put forward a set position. They may have little room to move or negotiate.

Citizens on the other hand are engaged in participation exercises as deliberators. Their role is to debate and deliberate in order to come up with what is in the public good. Effectively they are asked to put their own interest aside to come to a decision that is in the interest of the community.

It is important to identify whether your participation exercise will involve one or both of these groups and how they will participate. For example, you may involve your stakeholder representatives in your Steering Group so that they can participate in determining the agenda whilst your public participation exercise is consulting citizens. Or you may consult a mix of both stakeholders and citizens with the roles to be played by each shaped by the particulars of the project.

### Who should be involved?

Many citizens and community members may wish to engage only if the issue is one that has relevance to their lives and circumstances. What is **essential** is that citizens should be able to participate if they wish to do so.

Participants may be classified according to their level of engagement:

**Highly involved:** those who want to know what you are doing in detail. They will be willing to be engaged in one-on-one interviews, they will want to be involved in a Community Advisory Panel and directly negotiate with senior managers, ministerial advisers or Ministers. They are likely to be known to the organisation already – look through complaint files, letters to the Department or the Minister, in media articles or letters or in activist organisations.

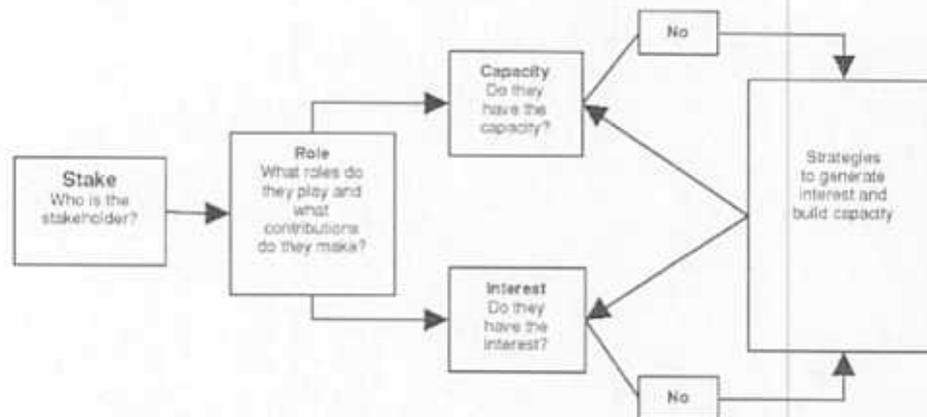
**Attentives:** those who rate your organisation as one of their top 20 concerns. They will be prepared to engage in focus groups and other forms of shared control. They are likely to be academics, informed observers and leaders in the community.

**Browsers:** those who will read about the issue in the newspaper, but don't or can't investigate themselves. The majority form their opinions based on what the highly involved and attentives think.

**General Public:** those who have not had the opportunity, support or skills to engage with the issue or with your organisation.



For the browsers and general public you might apply the following strategy:



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Knowing who your participants are will allow you to gain a greater understanding of their differing concerns and how these perspectives might influence the participation exercise.

The following questions may aid in identifying potential participants:

- Who is responsible for the issue?
- Who might be affected by the issue, negatively or positively?
- Who are the representatives of those likely to be affected?
- Who can make a contribution?
- Who is likely to mobilise for or against the issue?
- Whose absence from participation will detract from the final result?
- Which government departments have an interest in the project?

Locating and engaging participants is challenging and may require innovative approaches.

Community Service Directories, local newspapers, radio stations and the internet are good places to start. For broad community interest a random sample of citizens reflecting diversity across age, gender, culture, location, etc may be appropriate. The electoral roll might be a source of a statistically representative group of citizens. Also, take advantage of existing networks.

## Identify Participants

The nature of the issue and the scope of the public participation exercise will determine the appropriate number of participants.

It is important that you know your participants and their relationship to each other and the issue. It will also be beneficial to understand their history with the issue, their knowledge and their potential influence.

When choosing participants remember to ensure representativeness, openness and to cater for cultural and other differences.

### Time to Reflect

- Have we identified the major stakeholder groups and do you understand how they relate to each other?
- Do we know who is affected, interested, or can contribute to solutions?
- Do we know who could disrupt or promote the consultation?
- Are we familiar with the resources, level of organisation, knowledge level, scheduling constraints and familiarity with consultation processes that key participants bring to the table?
- Is there an equal opportunity for all interested parties to participate on equal terms?
- Have the roles and expectations of the participants been established?
- Have (will) participants been involved in the planning phase?
- What is the level of trust, credibility and commitment among participants?
- Are the numbers of participants appropriate to your goals?



## Planning: Linking Objectives and Evaluation

It is essential that both the consultation process and its impacts are evaluated.

Evaluation of the process aims to identify the main problems encountered, whether the consultation reached the target group, and the level of participant satisfaction. Evaluating the impact of consultation requires an estimation of whether participants' input had an identifiable impact on the content of the final policy decision. Evaluation and results should be communicated widely and may, in turn, prompt fruitful debate on the benefits and difficulties of consultation.

Regardless of the size or the complexity of your public participation exercise some measure of its success against well-defined criteria is necessary. Establishing what these criteria are will help during the project and after the project has finished.



**You should not attempt to establish specific evaluation criteria without reference to the objectives of your public participation exercise and to the principles of good practice.**

However, evaluation in many cases is designed and carried out after the event, and in too many cases, long after the event. The potential of thinking evaluatively whilst planning is that your planning, your practice and the evaluation of the consultation each become more consistent, focussed and effective.

Throughout the process it is important to continually monitor how the project is functioning and whether it is performing according to the goals and objectives you have set. This includes monitoring participants' perceptions of how the project is unfolding.

At the end of the project it will then be necessary to formally evaluate its effectiveness. Effectiveness in public participation means many things to many people. For organisers it may mean evaluating the cost-effectiveness of the project. Participants are more often concerned with issues of involvement –

were they involved early and did they have an impact. Any evaluation strategy must take account of both of these positions.



You must remember that the process does not finish at the end of the consultation. Planning involves thinking about what you are going to do after the public participation exercise and how you will keep participants informed. This is essential in maintaining trust and ensuring credibility. Evaluation helps to ensure that you deliver on your 'promise to the public'.

## Planning: Linking Objectives and Evaluation

Good evaluation will bring benefits to both the organisers and to those who have participated.

Organiser Benefits	Participant Benefits
Improved practice	Increased level of trust
Shows efficient use of resources	Shows evidence of accountability and transparency
Informed policy	Encourages future engagement
An aid in staff development	Provides information
	Education and understanding of issues

### *Why think about evaluation at the planning stage?*

- Thinking about your objectives and how you will evaluate them helps you to clarify your objectives, and helps you to focus and define your objectives more clearly. The link between evaluation criteria and the project's objectives must be integrated so that your evaluation will show whether your objectives have been achieved.
- Being aware of what indicators are going to be measured and how they will be used will help shape the method chosen. For example, if statistical data is required, a discussion-based method such as a focus group might not be most appropriate.
- It can often be helpful to "think back from the end point". Knowing what evaluation criteria will be assessed will ensure that they are incorporated into the public participation plan. For example, if representativeness is to be measured this needs to be taken into consideration when selecting participants. However, rigid evaluation measures should not drive your consultation practice.
- It may be appropriate and desirable to include participants in the formulation of the evaluation to ensure that all agree on what is important. Getting this sort of input early can help consulters understand participants' perspectives and also help develop trust.

### *Process and Products*

Evaluation must assess both the *products* (results and impacts) and the *process* of your public participation project. Evaluation of public participation projects is not simply a technical assessment of the outcomes/outputs but also considers the impact of the process itself on the participants.

*Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide* (the blue guide) included a set of Evaluation Criteria outlining nine areas where evaluation should be carried out. An adaptation of this table appears in Appendix Two outlining each of the nine criteria and describing some of the requirements contributing to their successful implementation. This table provides a useful overview of some of the issues that you will need to consider while planning your public participation exercise.



*Focusing on rigid targets identified at the outset can limit the ability of the project to respond to new opportunities or ideas.*



## Writing a Public Participation Plan

Like all projects your public participation exercise will benefit from a well-designed plan. The final step in the planning process is to write out your public participation plan.

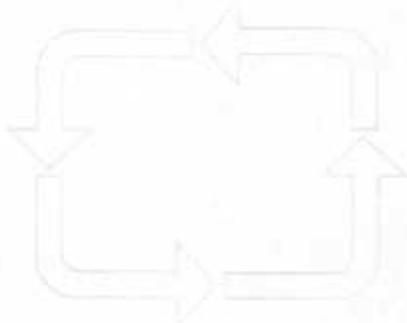
Such a plan:

- Helps to clarify what the issue is, what your objectives are and who you will involve. This can be useful both in forcing clarity of thought and also ensures that all agree to what is going to happen
- Helps in the process of allocating tasks and setting time frames
- Provides a document that can be circulated to stakeholders who can read it in their own timeframe and seek clarification if required



The plan should include:

- A brief introduction which articulates the plan's purpose and objectives
- The goals and objectives of the exercise
- The constraints, budgetary and other
- The assumptions made in the planning process
- Community profile
- Chronology of community participation
- Description of key community concerns
- Public participation program description:
  - framework and design
  - forums and processes
  - workshops
  - comment periods
  - how feedback will be provided
  - internal and external communication flows
  - self evaluation mechanisms
- Organisation and resources: specific roles and responsibilities, planning and coordination framework; resources and training needed to ensure effective implementation
- An Outline of the evaluation process ensuring that it is linked to the objectives
- A description of how feedback will be provided



## Summary

In the blue guide (*Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide*) you will find a table outlining some of the main consultation methods (Appendix One). Appendix One of this guide, *Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success*, categorises some of these methods into the five different levels of participation. While such material can be useful, remember that public participation exercises seldom follow these 'ideal types' but rather are often a combination of different methods moulded to fit the specific purpose and objectives of the exercise.

Involving the public in the decision making process at various levels has rightly become incorporated as best practice within Western Australian public, private and community sectors. With the popular and widespread application of public participation exercises there has been a substantial increase in the amount of material available to guide you in conducting such exercises. Some of the websites we have found useful are listed at the rear of the guide.

However, what cannot be over-emphasised is the importance of not becoming too caught up in the technical aspects of consulting at the expense of open communication, reflexivity and effective planning. Having a belief in the process, a genuine desire to involve the public and a clear idea of what it is you wish to achieve will provide the right environment and give you a head start in planning your next public participation exercise.

Good luck!

### **Public Participation Methods**

#### **Level 1 Inform / Educate**

Some of the methods used are:

- Printed material such as fact sheets, newsletters, brochures, issue papers
- Information repositories in sites such as libraries, schools, health centres and other public venues
- Technical documents reporting research or policy findings
- Paid advertisements in newspapers and magazines
- 'Fact Sheets' inserted in the local paper
- Feature stories in newspapers or magazines
- Press releases
- News conferences
- Web sites

#### **Fact Sheets**

##### *Tips*

- **KISS!** Keep it short and simple
- Make it visually interesting
- Q&A format works well

#### **Advantages**

- Can reach large target audience
- Allows for technical and legal reviews

#### **Disadvantages**

- No guarantee materials will be read
- Limited capability to communicate complicated concepts

#### **Shopping Centre Displays**

##### *Tips*

- Make display visually appealing
- Keep concepts simple
- Provide personnel to answer questions and provide further explanation
- Provide printed material which public can take away

#### **Advantages**

- Low cost
- Can be targeted to specific audience (ie within community)

#### **Disadvantages**

- Public fatigue of shopping centre displays (often used by commercial enterprises)
- May be seen as simply going through the motions

### **Case Study: Perth City Rail Advisory**

*Shopping centre displays at Mandurah, Rockingham and Thompson's Lake were used to inform citizens and gather feedback on the options for the rail route through central Perth for the direct rail link to Mandurah. Newspapers, the internet and pamphlet distribution at Perth City Rail Station and the Busport were utilised also.*

## Appendix One

### Level 2 Gather Information

Some of the methods used are:

- Questionnaires
- Surveys
- Websites
- User comments and complaints
- Public Hearings
- Staff feedback and suggestions

#### Surveys

##### Considerations

- Solicit information from representative sample of citizens
- Same questions are asked of every individual surveyed
- There are a variety of survey types: postal, interviewer, telephone
- Ensure statistically valid results are needed before making investment
- Survey/questionnaire should be professionally developed and administered to avoid bias

##### Advantages

- Can reach large numbers of people
- If same questions are retained, can be used for longitudinal studies
- Provides input from individuals who would be unlikely to attend meetings
- Provides input from cross-section of public not just activists
- Statistically tested results are more persuasive with political bodies and the general public

##### Disadvantages

- Response rate is generally low
- For statistically valid results, can be labour intensive and expensive
- Level of detail may be limited
- May be perceived as a public relations tool

### Case Study: Family and Domestic Violence Unit

*The Family and Domestic Violence Unit (Department for Community Development) called for input into the development of a Strategic Plan on Family and Domestic Violence. 'Level One' methods for this consultation included a discussion paper, brochure and feedback form, and website links and email response.*

*The purpose of this consultation was to consider ways in which the issue of family and domestic violence could be addressed by the community of Western Australia. Community forums and in-depth interviews were also conducted.*

*For further information visit [www.familyanddomesticviolence.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au](http://www.familyanddomesticviolence.communitydevelopment.wa.gov.au)*

### Level 3 Discuss/Involve

Some of the methods used are:

- Focus groups
- Workshops
- Online discussion groups
- Advisory Groups
- Visioning workshops
- Public forums

#### Focus Groups

8 – 10 people led by trained facilitator in 'one-off' discussion on particular topic.

#### Considerations

- Selection of group is of primary importance
- May need to have several groups to investigate views from different perspectives
- Value the input and commitment of group members
- Requires skilled facilitator
- Rewards/incentives may be offered.

#### Advantages

- Allows for brainstorming of ideas
- Can include those who may usually find themselves excluded (eg culturally and linguistically diverse groups)
- Can be flexible and tailored to accommodating diversity in all its forms
- Allows in-depth discussion

#### Disadvantages

- May be costly
- Lack of confidentiality
- Qualitative information only
- Difficulty in prioritising issues
- May not lend itself easily to discussing sensitive issues

#### Advisory Groups

A group of representative stakeholders assembled to provide public input to the planning process.

#### Considerations

- Define roles and responsibilities up front
- Be forthcoming with information
- Use a consistently credible process
- Interview potential committee members in person before selection
- Use third party facilitation
- Ensure members communicate with their constituencies

#### Advantages

- Provides detailed analyses for project issues
- Provides for understanding of other perspectives, leading toward compromise

#### Disadvantages

- General public may not embrace committee's recommendations
- Members may not achieve consensus
- Sponsors must accept need for give and take
- Time and labour intensive

#### Case Study: Community Advisory Group (Department of Justice)

*A community advisory group was formed to contribute advice and perspectives on the Metropolitan low-security prison for women project. Made up of affected stakeholders the group met once a month to identify and facilitate opportunities for community/prison interaction, community and Justice Department information exchange, and to promote the benefits of reform in the management of women prisoners in Western Australia. See <http://www.justice.wa.gov.au/>*

## Appendix One

### Level 4 Engage

Some of the methods used are:

- Charette<sup>6</sup>
- Representative Groups
- User Panels
- Round tables
- Deliberative Opinion Poll

#### Deliberative Opinion Poll

##### Considerations

- Builds on the opinion poll by incorporating element of deliberation
- Involves larger numbers than citizens juries and may involve less time
- Measures what public would think if it was informed and engaged around the issue.
- Not good for crisis decisions – best suited to issues with options and about which the public is not knowledgeable

##### Advantages

- Provides insights into public opinions and how people come to decisions
- Seeks informed opinions, does not force people to reach consensus
- Large, random sample

##### Disadvantages

- Incentives are important
- Requires a lot of preparation time
- Although sample size is large and random, ensuring representativeness is difficult

#### Case Study: Container Deposit Legislation Review (NSW)

*In 2000 the Minister for the Environment (NSW) commissioned an independent review into container deposit legislation (CDL) to ascertain whether CDL should be introduced, the willingness of citizens to pay for CDL and the appropriateness of various deposit options. The review consisted of two deliberative processes: a televote (deliberative opinion poll) and a citizens jury.*

*In the Televote, 400 randomly selected citizens participated in a two-stage telephone survey – the first with no information provided beyond their existing knowledge of CDL. The second survey took place one week after the receipt of background information that was developed in collaboration with the key stakeholder and interest groups.*

Source: Carson, White, Hendricks & Palmer 2002

<sup>6</sup> A Charette is an interactive and iterative planning/design strategy which is organised around collaboration between planners, designers and the community. The purpose of the process is to gather information, explore and discuss the alternatives before finalising the plan or design.

## Level 5 Partner

Some of the methods used are:

- Citizens juries
- Citizens panels
- Consensus conference
- Search conference
- Deliberative polling
- Sustainable community development

### *Citizens Jury*

- Juries are generally made up of 10 to 24 citizens
- Wording of key questions or charge performed by organiser
- Evidence is given by specialist witnesses to provide an overview of the issue
- Jurors cross-examine witnesses
- The process is facilitated by a moderator
- Juries are not required to reach a unanimous decision
- A report is prepared outlining all views presented by the jurors made available to the general public
- Juries generally run for 2–4 days

### **Process**

A citizen's jury will consider a pre-determined question and produce a response. It is therefore important for the commissioning body to have carried out all policy analysis including the co-ordination of relevant bodies and to be at the

decision making phase of the policy cycle.

To ensure integrity of process selection of the jury ought to be carried out by an independent professional. Some methods include random selection from the electoral roll, advertising for jury members, or through representative sampling. The small size of the jury indicates that it could not be fully representative whichever method is deployed.

Choose an independent facilitator and a neutral location. Sometimes the provision of an additional facilitator who acts to support and assist jurors will benefit the jury process<sup>7</sup>.

Jurors are given relevant background information and meet key witnesses. In smaller groups jury members study the information and cross-examine witnesses. The findings of all small discussion groups are presented to the whole jury for deliberation. Finally the jury's conclusions are presented to the body who commissioned the jury.

A final report is prepared by the jury reflecting the conclusions, and because decisions do not have to be unanimous, any dissenting opinions are to be included.

The commissioning body must publicise the conclusions and respond within a specified time-frame.

## Case Study: Reid Highway Extension

*In 2001 the WA Minister for Planning and Infrastructure conducted a citizens jury to address the issue of traffic flow on and off the new Reid Highway Extension.*

*The jury was chosen from a random sample of 250 residents from the surrounding area. 40 residents applied and 12 were chosen according to geography to ensure that each key area was represented.*

*The jury was presented with information in the form of submissions, papers from relevant governmental bodies, local council, relevant action groups and other interested parties. Jurors were able to ask questions and clarify issues. At the conclusion of the presentations the jury deliberated and from these deliberations ten options were developed.*

<sup>7</sup> see Davies, Elizabeth, Hanley, New & Sang (1998)

## Appendix One

### Citizens Jury: Points to Consider

- Costs involved can be considerable
- A project team would be established to develop the question to be presented and establish ground rules
- All relevant and interested bodies will need to be consulted.
- Expert witnesses must be assembled and briefed on the nature of the consultation
- An independent facilitator must be engaged and the jury selected (generally through an independent agency)

Each of these stages in the process takes considerable time and resources.

It should also be remembered that the jurors themselves will have outlaid their time, energy and commitment throughout the sitting.

The transparency of a Citizens Jury and the active participation of the public as jury members are two of the major benefits. It allows for informed debate on an issue producing an informed conclusion.

### **Consensus Conference**

- Panels are made up of between 10-16 lay members.
- Advertisements are placed in the media calling for members
- Conferences generally run for 5 days including 2 days of preparation
- Members determine the wording of questions to be asked
- Evidence is given by specialist witnesses to provide an overview of the issue
- Panel members cross-examine witness statements
- The process is facilitated by a moderator
- Conference is open to the public who may also question witnesses
- Panel members must reach a consensus
- A report is prepared outlining the consensus opinion of panel

### **Process**

Advertisements are placed in the media calling for people interested in taking part in a research project. Members should have no specialist knowledge of the matter under consideration.

A market research company may be employed to recruit a group reflecting a range of gender, age, education, occupation, and geographic location consistent with the Australian population.

An initial two days is set aside for members to familiarise themselves with the topic and draft a list of questions to be asked of the expert witnesses.

During the three days of the conference witnesses are called to present 'for' and 'against' arguments for each of the questions. They can be further questioned by the panel during this time. Some questioning of witnesses by the public gallery may be allowed.

The panel will then assess the information they have gained to develop a consensus report summarising the evidence and expressing the panels concerns, expectations and recommendations.

The report is made available for public distribution.

### **Points to Consider**

- Costs involved can be considerable in terms of expenditure and time
- It requires a high level of commitment from panel members who have to absorb a large amount of complex material in a short space of time
- Representation of both sides of the argument requires the co-ordination of a number of expert witnesses
- An independent and skilled facilitator must be engaged and the panel members selected (generally through an independent agency)
- Having the conference open to the public ensures transparency and may increase awareness of the issue beyond the conference itself. Allows questions from the public; however, there is the potential for the public gallery to contain interest group representatives who can thereby play a more strategic role in the debate

# Appendix Two

## Evaluation Criteria and Guidelines for the Effective Conduct of a participation Exercise

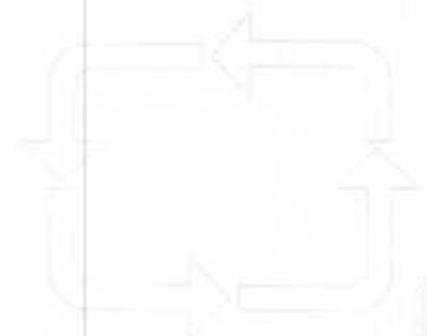
CRITERIA	DEFINITION	CONTEXT	REQUIREMENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE
<b>TASK DEFINITION</b>	The nature and scope of the participation task should be clearly defined	Context	Identify all the factors which have made this exercise necessary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulatory (e.g. required by law)</li> <li>Social (e.g. need to involve public)</li> <li>Organisational (e.g. organisational policy)</li> </ul>
		Scope	Describe the scope of the exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What issues will it address?</li> <li>Whom do they affect?</li> <li>What is the timescale?</li> </ul>
		Aims & Outputs	Specify the aims and outputs of the exercise, in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision-making status (will its results be advisory, or directly inform decision-making?)</li> <li>Intended benefits and impacts (what substantial benefit will the exercise have, what do you hope to achieve?)</li> </ul>
		Rationale for Exercise	Justify why this type of exercise is being adopted and not others. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List pros and cons for the different exercises</li> </ul>
<b>REPRESENTATIVENESS</b>	The participants in the exercise should comprise a broadly representative sample of the affected population	Stakeholders	Identify all persons and groups with a legitimate interest in the issue. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State appropriate groups (define their nature) and clarify reason for interest/involvement</li> <li>State appropriate groups (define their nature) and clarify why they are not to be involved.</li> </ul>
		Selection	Give full details of the selection procedure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify sources from which participants will be chosen</li> <li>Identify and justify selection method (e.g. random versus stratified)</li> <li>Decide on whether participants are to be appointed or self-selected (justify)</li> <li>Fit on proportion of participants from each stakeholder group (justify)</li> <li>Decide on eligibility constraints (detail and justify)</li> <li>Check if ethical approval is needed and obtain.</li> </ul>
		Participants' Role	Specify the balance of participants between representatives (delegates) and individuals (general public), and justify
		Commitment	Detail steps being taken to recruit the right participants (i.e. participants in the proper proportions belonging to the intended target groups). Discuss whether more can be done with hard to reach groups
		Actual Representativeness	Set up mechanisms to monitor actual representativeness of participants (describe) and respond appropriately
<b>RESOURCE ACCESSIBILITY (USE)</b>	Participants should have access to the appropriate resources to enable them to successfully fulfil their brief	People	Adopt a policy on the rotation of participants if appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check that enough people are involved in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation</li> <li>Backup</li> <li>Running of the exercise</li> </ul> </li> <li>Ensure they know what they are doing (evidence of training)</li> </ul>
		Time	Consider the time demands of the exercise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set out timetable for the exercise</li> <li>Get evidence that the intended timetable is realistic and sufficient, not just hopeful</li> </ul>

<b>RESOURCE ACCESSIBILITY (Cont)</b>		Facilities	<p>Detail physical requirements needed to conduct the exercise and justify by reference to, for example, similar exercises. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipate and provide facilities needed (list)</li> <li>Anticipate and provide equipment needed (list)</li> </ul> <p>Consider expertise requirements, for the task and the participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What experts do you need (justify why)?</li> <li>Are they available?</li> <li>Are back-ups available if they become unavailable?</li> </ul> <p>Estimate costs and factor in uncertainties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What monetary resources are available?</li> <li>Over what time period?</li> </ul> <p>Justify information needs of participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipate information needs for participants</li> <li>Identify available sources of information</li> <li>Ensure information is appropriate/understandable for participants (level details and usable format)</li> </ul> <p>Run through the expected course of events during exercise (if a)</p>
<b>STRUCTURED DECISION MAKING</b>	The participation exercise should use/provide appropriate mechanisms for structuring and displaying the decision-making process	Expertise  Finance  Information  Operational Management  Procedures  Flexibility  Consistency Competence  Validation of Methods Shared Understanding Procedures and Outputs  Feedback	<p>Detail procedures for information exchange:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specify the exact format for discussion, presentation and exchange of information (between participants and organisers, etc.)</li> <li>Specify procedures to be used for reaching group decisions/consensus, if appropriate. (Consider if these are appropriate for the exercise and for the participants)</li> </ul> <p>'Brainstorm' worst case scenarios (unexpected events) and think how to respond to them (who, when how)</p> <p>Consider whether the exercise is likely to lead to contradictory outcomes and how to deal with this</p> <p>Specify competence requirements of participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decide whether a minimum competence level is necessary for participation (in what way – knowledge?)</li> <li>Consider whether the level is likely to be met and what to do to bring non-competent participants up to it (if anything)</li> </ul> <p>Identify existing/external standards/references that can be used to benchmark procedures used in exercise and generally ensure quality control. If none exist, emphasize this</p> <p>Identify procedures for confirming whether there was sufficient shared understanding of essential concepts and terms by all parties</p> <p>Set appropriate level of control for Participants over the procedures and outputs of the exercise. I.e., allow Participants to influence the way the exercise is run, and the questions that are asked, to the maximum level that is sensible (which could be none at all). Justify this.</p> <p>Arrange to obtain Participant feedback on the exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detail/set up mechanism for obtaining Participants' assessment (e.g. questionnaire, interviews)</li> <li>Justify why this mechanism is adequate</li> </ul>
<b>INDEPENDENCE</b>	The participation process should be conducted in an independent (unbiased) way		

# Appendix Two

INDEPENDENCE (cont)		External Checks	<p>Detail and arrange external checks of independence of procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install external checks on independence (e.g. independent Evaluator, Advisory Committee)</li> <li>Justify why these are adequate.</li> <li>Collect evidence of vested interests.</li> </ul> <p>Identify legislation and regulations that bear upon exercise (if any – if not, still acknowledge this)</p> <p>Ensure exercise will comply with both the letter and the spirit of regulations.</p>
TRANSPARENCY	The process should be transparent so that the relevant population can see what is going on and how decisions are being made	Legal / Regulatory	<p>Decide what level/type of publicity (justify) and set up</p> <p>Specify audit trail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is covered?</li> <li>How is it recorded?</li> <li>Who is responsible for this?</li> <li>What is its format (report etc.)?</li> </ul> <p>Specify availability of audit trail (i.e. who is it available to? If anybody is excluded from viewing the audit trail (e.g. participants), justify</p> <p>Decide the appropriate format and level of detail for audit information</p> <p>Decide how to identify and measure specific, concrete impacts of exercise, in terms of specific decisions</p> <p>Decide how to identify and measure impacts in terms of corporate policy-making procedures.</p> <p>Decide how to identify and measure impacts in terms of corporate approach to handling the issues and general corporate 'mindset'.</p> <p>Decide on what kind of media response will constitute a positive impact of exercise.</p> <p>Ensure all parties have enough time to become familiar with all the elements of the exercise, if the exercise involves no preparation by Participants, acknowledge this</p> <p>Specify where in the decision-making process the exercise will take place. Justify that this is early enough.</p> <p>Revisit Task Definition / Aims</p> <p>Decide which Aims will be used to assess whether exercise has succeeded or not. Justify choice.</p> <p>Decide how costs will be calculated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a policy on indirect, opportunity, emotional, controversy, political, social and organisational costs. Justify</li> <li>Decide how to weight costs against benefits</li> </ul> <p>Decide what alternatives to this exercise would be (have been) and how exercise could be compared against them</p> <p>Adopt a policy on how benefits should be distributed among Stakeholders to constitute a 'fair' exercise. Justify.</p>
INFLUENCE (Impact)	The output of the procedure should have a genuine impact upon policy	Publicity Auditability  Availability  Accessibility Specific Decisions  Corporate Policy Corporate Style  Media Coverage Familiarisation  Entry Point	
TIMELINESS (early involvement)	The participants should be involved as early as possible in the process, as soon as value judgments become salient/relevant	Effectiveness	
COST EFFECTIVENESS	The procedure should in some sense be cost effective from the point of view of the sponsors.	Benefit/Cost	
		Fairness	

Source: Marsh, Rowe & Frewer, 2001



## Appendix Three

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<p><b>Objective</b> To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and/or solutions</p>	<p><b>Objective</b> To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</p>	<p><b>Objective</b> To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered</p>	<p><b>Objective</b> To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution</p>	<p><b>Objective</b> To place final decision making in the hands of the public</p>
<p><b>Promise to the Public</b> We will keep you informed</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b> We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b> We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b> We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b> We will implement what you decide</p>
<p><b>Example Tools</b> Fact Sheets Web Sites Open Houses</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b> Public Comment Focus Groups Surveys Public Meetings</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b> Workshops Deliberative Polling</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b> Citizen Advisory Committees Consensus-building Participatory Decision Making</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b> Citizens Juries Ballots Delegated Decisions</p>

Source: IAP2, 2000

## Appendix Four

### Vroom-Yetton Decision Tree

In 1973 Victor Vroom and Phillip Yetton introduced a contingency decision-making model for the business world. The model was intended to aid in deciding on the level of participation by subordinates to improve the quality of decision making in a corporate setting. The utility of the model was verified in a number of empirical studies.

The model was subsequently modified slightly to allow for public participation in general and in natural resource decision-making in specifically, and has been tested in a number of independent studies (Lawrence and Deagen 2001).

1. Does the manager have sufficient information to make a high quality decision?

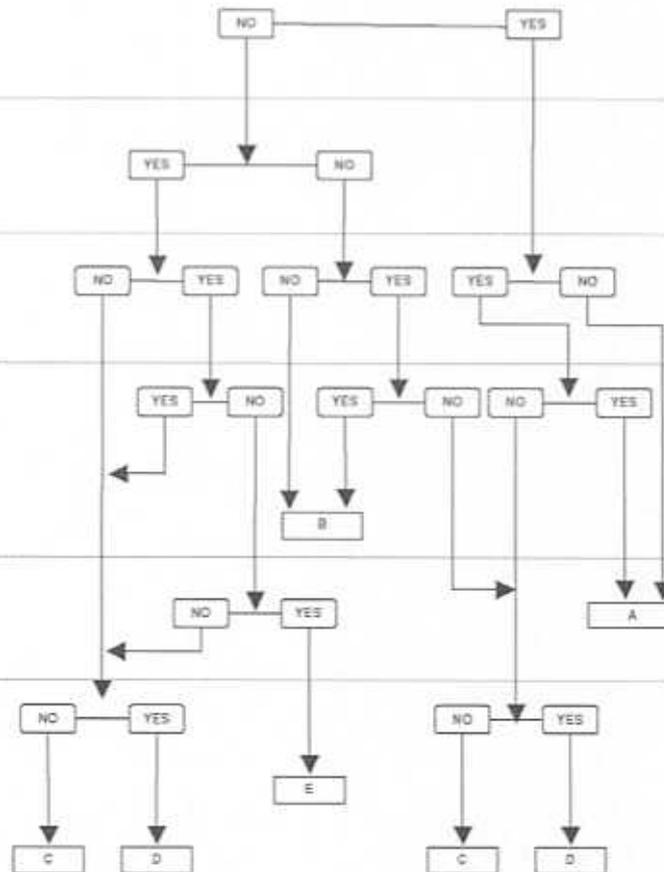
2. Is the problem structured such that there is space for alternative solutions?

3. Is public acceptance of the decision critical to effective implementation?

4. If public acceptance is necessary, is it reasonably assured if the manager decides alone?

5. Are the public and stakeholders willing to engage in a dialogue in order to improve the situation?

6. Would the quality of public input (or future relations) be improved if learning occurs among the public and stakeholders about the issues?



#### KEY

- A: The manager solves the problem or makes the decision alone without public involvement (=INFORM).
- B: The manager seeks information from segments of the public, but decides alone in a manner which may or may not reflect public influence. (=CONSULT)
- C: The manager shares the problem with separate segments of the public or stakeholders, getting ideas and suggestions, then makes a decision which reflects public influence. (=INVOLVE, with separated stakeholder segments)
- D: The manager shares the problem with the public and stakeholders as an assembled group, getting ideas and suggestions, then makes a decision which reflects public influence. (=INVOLVE, with mixed participants)
- E: The manager shares the problem with the public and stakeholders as an assembled group, and together the manager and the group attempt to reach agreement on a solution. (=PARTNER)

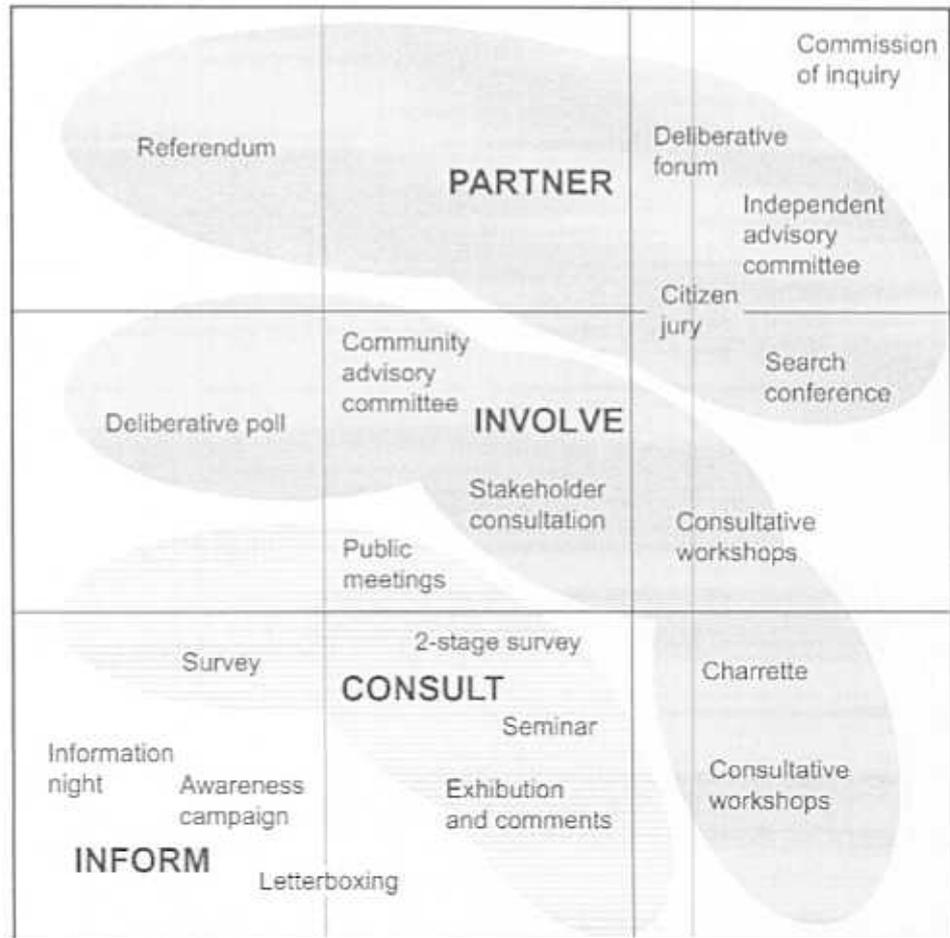


## Appendix Five

High levels of **risk** in the situation  
eg. potential for negative social and environmental impacts



Low levels of **risk** in the situation



Simple **information** to be understood



Complex **information** to be understood

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## Useful Websites

Caledonia Centre for Social Development <http://www.caledonia.org.uk/real.htm>

Canadian Centre for Management Development, *Public Consultation Guide: Changing the Relationship between Government and Canadians*, available at:  
[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hptb-dgpsa/ocapi-bpcc/framework\\_guidelines/framework\\_guides\\_cover\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hptb-dgpsa/ocapi-bpcc/framework_guidelines/framework_guides_cover_e.html)

Canberra Connect <http://www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au>

CH2M HILL, *Assessing The Effectiveness of Project-Based Public Involvement Processes: A Self-assessment Tool for Practitioners*, available online at:  
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UK Cabinet Office Service First Unit <http://www.servicefirst.gov.uk>



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Department of Sport and Recreation

Office of Consumer and Public Involvement, Health Canada

Institute of Food Research (UK)

Department of Health and Health and Safety Executive (UK)

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

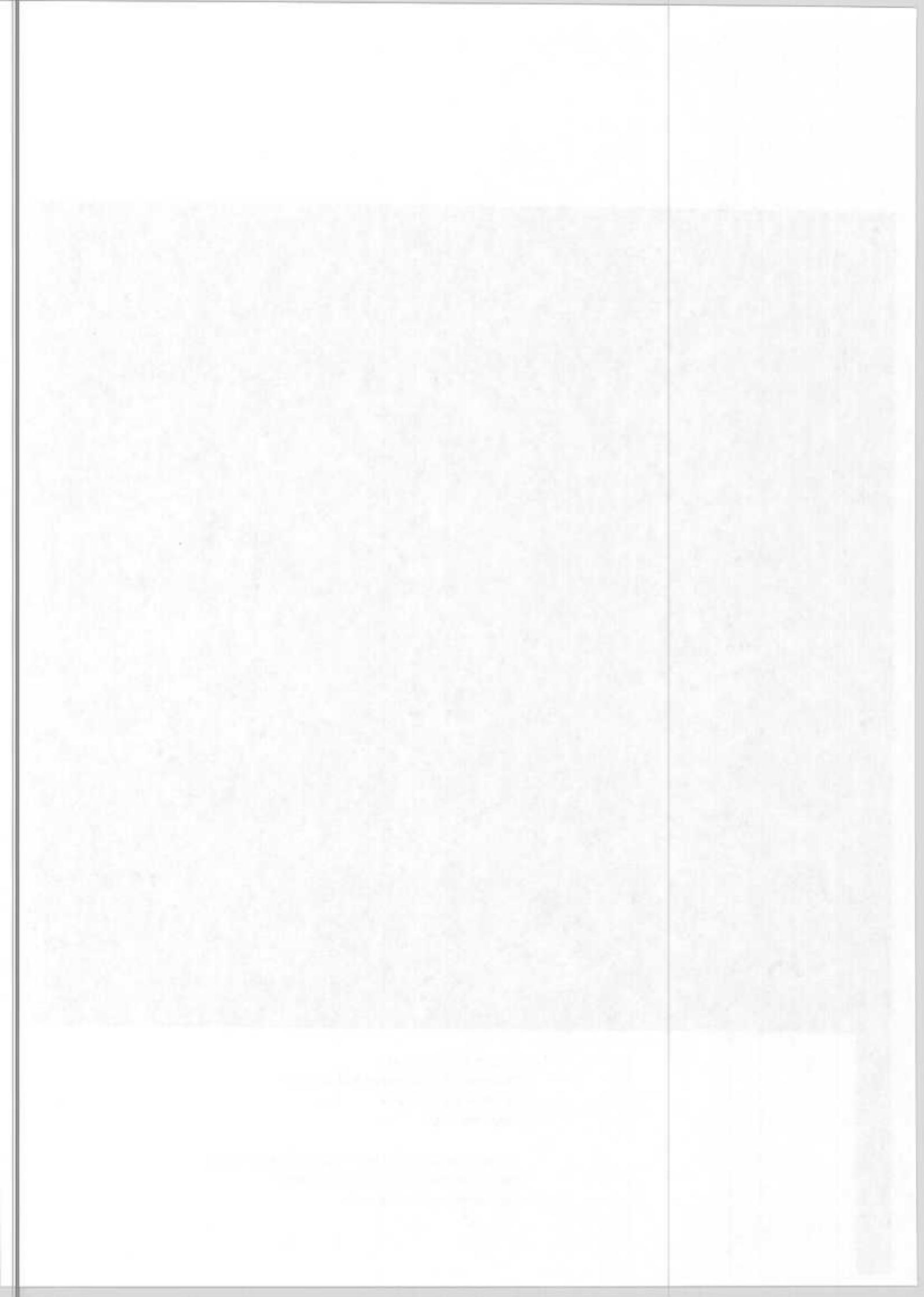
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UN-HABITAT





# Consulting Citizens:

A RESOURCE GUIDE

APRIL 2002



Department of the  
Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Citizens and Civic Unit

## **The Purpose of this Guide**

This Guide has been produced as the first step in establishing best practice guidelines for government agencies undertaking consultation. However, the Guide has broader application and can also be used by:

- > Local government
- > Project developers
- > Politicians
- > Consultants
- > Non-Government Organisations
- > Interest Groups.



The guidelines were developed in a consultative manner drawing on the experience and input of people from government departments, non-government organisations and the community. In particular, a public forum on consultation practice was held in late November 2001. The input of all forum participants, and the working group established at the forum to assist development of this Guide, is gratefully acknowledged.

In keeping with this consultative approach, readers are invited to offer comments and suggestions. To provide feedback please contact the Citizens and Civics Unit via email on [bacitizen@dpc.wa.gov.au](mailto:bacitizen@dpc.wa.gov.au) or in writing to:

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the Citizens and Civics Unit's homepage:  
<http://www.ccu.dpc.wa.gov.au>.*



## Foreword

One of the enduring challenges faced by any government is encouraging citizens to participate in public affairs - to become active citizens.

Participation helps to create a more inclusive and equitable society. It also strengthens our democratic institutions. One of the most effective and accessible mechanisms to help achieve greater participation, and one that has been innovatively used by my Government, is community consultation.

Consultation promotes active citizenship by encouraging individuals to provide real input into public life and decision-making. The benefits of genuine consultation, involving listening and actively responding to concerns and issues raised, cannot be overstated. It means decision-makers are better placed to make informed judgments by tapping into fresh ideas and new sources of information. For individual citizens this provides an opportunity to express their views and influence the outcomes of decisions that affect them.

Decisions that have been reached through a consultative process carry greater legitimacy and credibility in the community. Engaging the community in decision-making builds trust within communities and in our democratic systems of government. It can lead to new partnerships between citizens and policy makers through a shared sense of ownership of the issues that impact on us as a community.

Different forms of consultations are commonplace throughout our State yet they vary widely in terms of effectiveness and outcomes. This Guide aims to establish best practice in consultation. It details the vital elements of a consultative process and highlights how careful planning will help to ensure the best possible outcomes from the decision-making process. It is another way the Western Australian Government is demonstrating its commitment to increasing participation in all aspects of government policy.

I encourage all organisations to use this Guide to more effectively involve citizens in decision-making. In so doing, you will help create a stronger and more democratic society for all Western Australians.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Gallop', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**DR GEOFF GALLOP MLA**  
**PREMIER**

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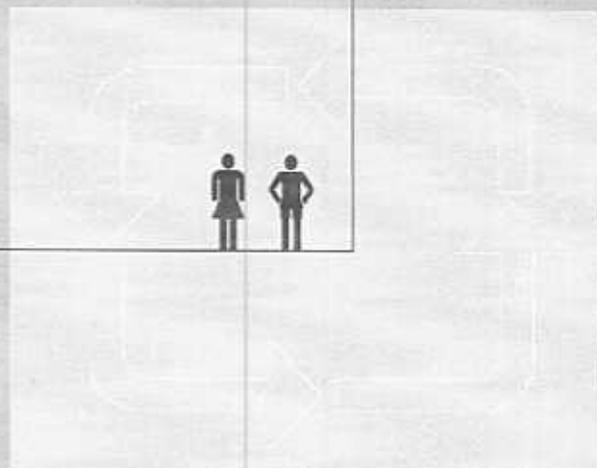
## How to Use This Guide

This Guide provides a starting point for consultation, offering best practice guidelines rather than formulas. Further information can be obtained by referring to the books, articles and electronic sources listed in the Resource Section.

The Guide is divided into three main sections:

- > *Preparing for Consultation* outlines the critical preliminary steps to be undertaken before the consultation
- > *Foundations for Effective Consultation* looks at some of the issues which are universal to all forms of consultation
- > *Outcomes* examines one of the most important and least developed elements in the consultative process - the follow up stages.

In each of the sections some important questions are raised. The answers to these questions will be determined by a number of factors such as the nature of the issues, stakeholders, consultation method and so on.



## 1.0 Introduction



*Engaging citizens in policy-making is a sound investment and a core element of good governance. It allows governments to tap wider sources of information, perspectives and potential solutions, and improves the quality of the decisions reached. Equally important, it contributes to building trust in government, raising the quality of democracy and strengthening civic capacity.*

(OECD, Caddy & Vergez, 2001)

In October 2001 a report was prepared for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) discussing the importance of engaging citizens in policy-making. This comprehensive report, *Citizens as Partners: Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy Making* (Caddy & Vergez 2001) highlights the many benefits of public participation to all involved.

The report notes that greater participation by citizens can:

- > Raise the quality of policies
- > Raise the chances for successful implementation
- > Reinforce the legitimacy of the decision-making process and its final results
- > Increase the chance of voluntary compliance
- > Increase the scope for forms of partnerships with citizens

Effective citizen participation requires that four essential conditions be met:

- > Access to objective, reliable and relevant information
- > Clear goals
- > Sufficient time, resources and flexibility for citizens to actively participate
- > Commitment from government.

This OECD report provides a set of **principles** for engaging citizens (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Guiding Principles for Engaging Citizens in Policy-Making**

*1. Commitment*

Leadership and strong commitment to information, consultation and active participation in policy-making is needed at all levels - from politicians, senior managers and public officials.

*2. Rights*

Citizens' rights to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in policy-making must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens when exercising their rights must also be clearly stated. Independent institutions for oversight, or their equivalent, are essential to enforcing these rights.

*3. Clarity*

Objectives for, and limits to, information, consultation and active participation during policy-making should be well defined from the outset. The respective roles and responsibilities of citizens (in providing input) and government (in making decisions for which they are accountable) must be clear to all.

*4. Time*

Public consultation and active participation should be undertaken as early in the policy process as possible to allow a greater range of policy solutions to emerge and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective. Information is needed at all stages of the policy cycle.

*5. Objectivity*

Information provided by government during policy-making should be objective, complete and accessible. All citizens should have equal treatment when exercising their rights of access to information and participation.

*6. Resources*

Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed if public information, consultation and active participation in policy-making are to be effective. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training. An organisational culture that supports their efforts is highly important.

*7. Coordination*

Initiatives to inform, request feedback from and consult citizens should be coordinated across government to enhance knowledge management, ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of 'consultation fatigue' among citizens and civil society.

*8. Accountability*

Governments have an obligation to account for the use they make of citizens' inputs received through feedback, public consultation and active participation. Measures to ensure that the policy-making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny and review are crucial to increasing government accountability overall.

*9. Evaluation*

Governments need the tools, information and capacity to evaluate their performance in providing information, consultation and engaging citizens in order to adapt to new requirements and changing conditions for policy making.

*10. Active Citizenship*

Governments benefit from active citizens and a dynamic civil society and can take concrete actions to facilitate access to information and participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens' civic education and skills as well as to support capacity building among civil society organisations.

(Adapted from: OECD, Caddy & Vergez, 2001)

## 1.1 Empowering Citizens through Participation



*Empowerment is both a process and an outcome*

Empowerment is about people taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, developing skills, solving problems and increasing their self-confidence. Consultation is an ideal tool to empower individual citizens and communities. Institutions can facilitate this by providing an environment that encourages and appreciates public participation.

Public participation is both a means and an end. As a means, it is a process through which citizens and communities cooperate to provide input into programs and projects. As an end, it empowers citizens and communities through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and experience. In itself, involvement in public life is a positive outcome as it contributes to a strong civil society. It also means decision and policy makers can utilise the contributions of citizens.

Participation ranges from the provision of information, to involvement through consultation, collaboration, decision-making and implementation. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has produced a Public Participation Spectrum (Figure 2) which shows how various techniques may be employed to increase the level of public impact.

Citizens who care enough about their community and environment to contribute to the process of decision-making are the essence of a more participatory democracy.

Figure 2: Public Participation Spectrum



INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and/or solutions</p>	<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions</p>	<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered</p>	<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution</p>	<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>To place final decision making in the hands of the public</p>
<p><b>Promise to the Public</b></p> <p>We will keep you informed</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b></p> <p>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b></p> <p>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b></p> <p>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible</p>	<p><b>Promise to the Public</b></p> <p>We will implement what you decide</p>
<p><b>Example Tools</b></p> <p>Fact Sheets Web Sites Open Houses</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b></p> <p>Public Comment Focus Groups Surveys Public Meetings</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b></p> <p>Workshops Deliberative Polling</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b></p> <p>Citizen Advisory Committees Consensus-building Participatory Decision Making</p>	<p><b>Example Tools</b></p> <p>Citizens' Juries Ballots Delegated Decisions</p>

(Source: IAP2 2000)

## 1.2 Build Partnerships through Consultation

Genuine and credible consultation can contribute significantly to deliberative democracy, building trust and confidence in people and unleashing their potential as citizens. There are many models of consultation. These range from public meetings, forums and workshops, to more extensive processes such as summits, statewide consultations and parliamentary committees. These varying models of consultation are suited to different issues and objectives.

Consultation is not simply about collecting the views and opinions of citizens. Rather it should be thought of as a two-way information transfer - an opportunity to:

- > engage citizens in the activities of government; and
- > educate communities about government and decision-making processes.

Consultation is a complex and dynamic process, and like any important process it benefits from **best practice** and **diligence**. It should be considered an essential tool for policy makers, project developers and service providers, implementers and evaluators.

## 1.3 Consensus - Outcomes or Process?

*Consensus does not necessarily mean agreement; rather, it means an outcome which all participants can live with.*

There are two perspectives on consultation:

- i. 'Right result', or substantive consensus - concerned with the **outcome** of the consultation, and
- ii. 'Right practice', or procedural consensus - concerned with reaching agreement about the **process**.

These two perspectives are not necessarily alternatives. It is important for those planning the consultation to determine what is their focus - getting the 'right result' or ensuring that the processes and procedures are likely to result in an outcome that every participant can live with. A decision is more likely to be deemed legitimate if all participants concur on the process for making that decision.

## 1.4 Why Consult?

As the community becomes more diverse, decision-making processes become evermore complex. At the same time, the public is demanding to be more involved in decision-making. Government (and other) organisations increasingly recognise that engaging the community in consultation is good practice.

Organisations will benefit from the experiences and knowledge of those who are most affected by policy decisions, and profit also from the practical experiences and the diverse views, knowledge and skills of the community.

Consultations enable the active participation of citizens in decision-making, as well as the creation of partnerships between community, business and government. Participation through consultation can reduce citizens' sense of exclusion from, and lack of access to, decisions affecting their lives. Community engagement in the decision-making process leads to a sense of ownership of the outcome.

Consultations therefore:

- > Assist in governmental decision-making
- > Demonstrate a commitment to accountability, democracy and transparency
- > Empower citizens and promote community involvement
- > Foster democratic dialogue among citizens and revitalize civic culture
- > Help in planning and prioritising various options
- > Improve the level, profile and efficiency of services

- > Offer and/or create new perspectives and solutions on issues
- > Provide an opportunity for community input on issues at times other than elections
- > Provide greater legitimacy for decision-making
- > Raise awareness of issues and facilitate learning
- > Reveal actual or potential problems
- > Reveal the needs and wants of the community.

## 1.5 When to Consult

Consultation should be viewed as extending throughout a project cycle rather than as a 'one-off' exercise. It should begin early in the planning stage. Whilst most projects are suited to consultation, some policy questions will particularly benefit from citizen participation. It is necessary therefore to fully consider what type of issues are best suited to consultation.

The following criteria may be useful in deciding which issues would benefit from consultation:

- > The issue affects the rights and entitlements of members of the community or a significant group in the community
- > The issue is likely to affect people's quality of life
- > The issue affects the natural environment
- > A significant number of people, or particular groups, are likely to have strong views on the issue
- > Insufficient information is available on which to make a decision about an issue.

It is neither effective nor appropriate to consult if a final decision has already been made, or if the commissioning body cannot influence a final decision, or when there is insufficient time and/or resources available.

Ineffective or inappropriate consultation is counterproductive and increases apathy and cynicism - not only towards future consultations, but also political processes, public institutions and our systems of governance.

## 1.6 Intentions and Commitment

*Before embarking on any consultative program it is vital to be clear about the intentions, objectives and implications of the consultation.*

Recognition within an organisation of the value of consultation requires the development of what can be called a **culture of consultation**. Such a culture is based on collaboration, cooperation and a commitment to the role of citizens as decision-makers. It is important that everyone involved in the process not only believes in the value of engaging the wider community in decision-making but also recognises the diverse viewpoints the community can have on any particular issue.

When engaging the public in a consultation process it is essential that the reasons or intentions of the process are both credible and clear to all. For example, a consultative process that appears to be too narrow in scope will lack the credibility required to effectively engage the community.

The Report of the Taskforce established to review the Machinery of Western Australia's Government, *Government Structures for Better Results* (June 2001) supports the development of a culture of consultation. The report refers to the need "...to re-engage Western Australians in the business of government, strengthening local communities and connecting citizens with a shared vision for the State."



## 2.0 Preparing for Consultation

*So you have decided to consult. Now what? The following section outlines seven essential, practical steps towards implementing a consultation.*

### 2.1 Planning the Consultation

Before embarking on any form of consultation it is important to think through exactly **why** you are consulting and **what** you hope to achieve. Determining answers to the following questions may help to define the parameters and will assist in the consultation design.

- > What is the aim or purpose of the consultation?
- > What are the issues?
- > Who should be consulted?
- > Who is affected by the issue?
- > Who will manage the consultation?
- > What resources are available for the consultation?
- > What level of commitment, in terms of time and resources, is sought from stakeholders?
- > Are there any citizens whose special needs should be addressed/accommodated in order that they may participate more fully?
- > When would be the best time to consult?
- > How much time can be spent?
- > Have similar consultations been planned or carried out? How can the consultation be coordinated to take this into account?
- > What information should be made available to citizens to ensure their informed deliberation?
- > How will the information from the consultation be used and by whom?
- > How will recommendations be implemented?
- > How will the outcomes of the consultation and the final decision be conveyed to the participants and to those with an interest?
- > How and when will evaluation be carried out? What will be evaluated and by whom?
- > Where applicable, what role will the community have in implementation or ongoing management?

## 2.2 Identifying the Issues

Decision-making begins with issue identification. This can often be an iterative process with new issues emerging through further exploration. Planning should take into account:

- > What is the nature of the issue?
- > Whose issue is it?
- > Is resolution of the issue possible?

Issues can be highlighted to decision-makers through a number of external factors, including:

- > Community influence
- > Demographic changes
- > Economic factors
- > International relations
- > Legal judgements
- > Media attention
- > Special interest groups
- > Technological developments.

Or from within government:

- > Audit reports
- > Budgetary considerations
- > Ongoing monitoring
- > Performance indicators
- > Research, planning and policy processes.

The clear definition of an issue is essential for effective consultation to take place. Some issues may need to be broken into smaller, more manageable components. How an issue is defined will influence the range of options for achieving an acceptable outcome.

Acknowledgement that an issue exists is not, in itself, enough for it to be acted upon. An agreement between significant interests and individuals on the nature of the issue is necessary, together with a belief that a solution is possible, or that a better outcome is achievable. Even where this is achieved, the identified issue must be of consequence to, and be consistent with, the goals of the organisation. Finally, the issue has to be seen as falling within the organisation's responsibility.

## 2.3 Identifying the Aim of the Consultation

Some important factors need to be considered before determining which consultation method is best suited to a particular issue.

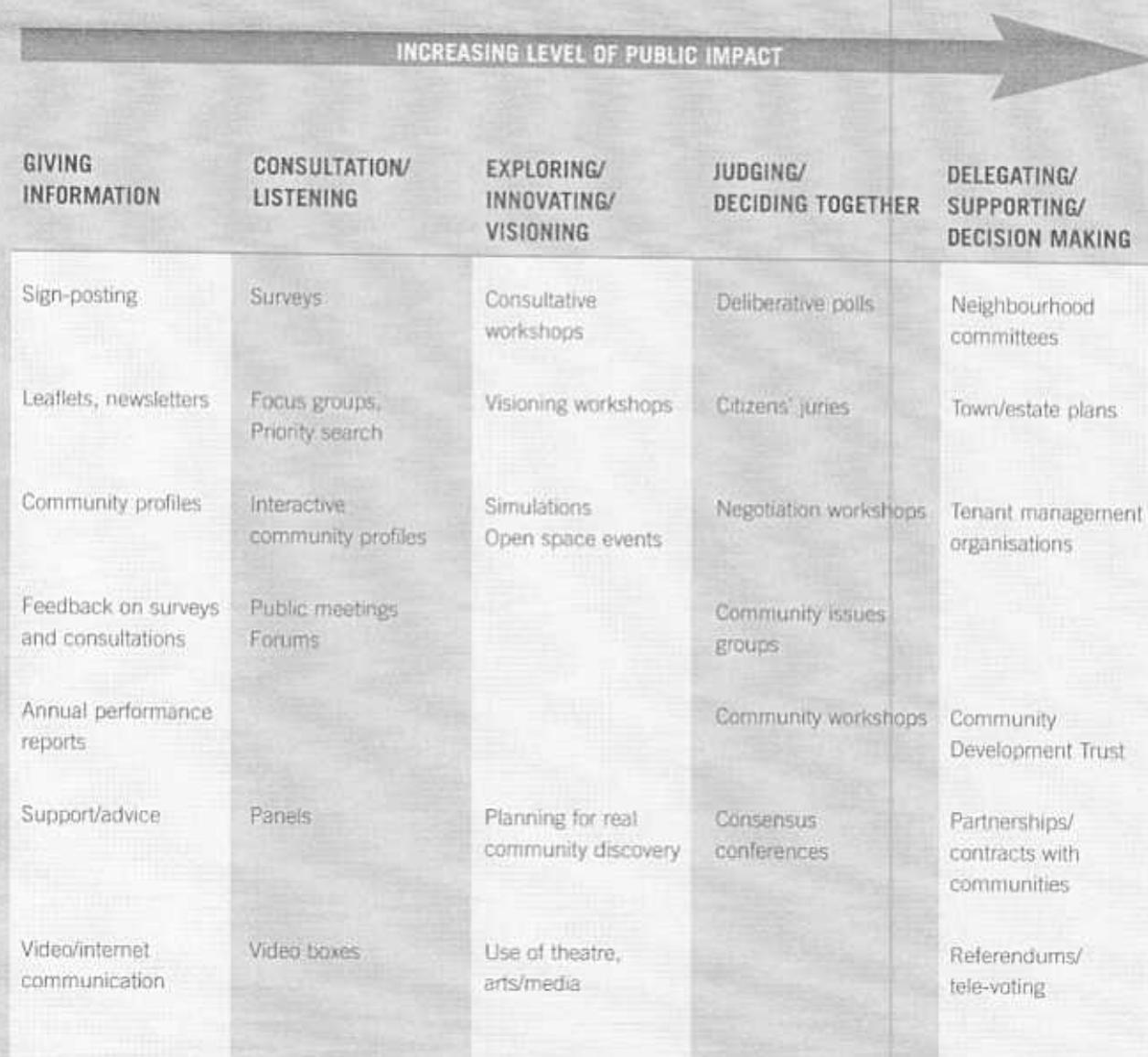
Is the purpose of consultation to:

- > Contribute to the development of policies or strategies?
- > Establish service priorities?
- > Evaluate service delivery or performance?
- > Explore community needs or wants?
- > Foster a partnership with the community?
- > Gain or gauge public support?
- > Gather data in the form of statistics or opinions to guide future decisions?
- > Reach a consensual agreement?
- > Resolve disputes?

Both the 'identified issue' and the ultimate objective will determine which consultation method is most applicable.

The Office of Public Management in the United Kingdom (cited in Coleman & Götze: 2001) has developed a model of public engagement similar to that advanced by the International Association for Public Participation. This model, which matches aims to consultation methods, is summarised in Figure 3.

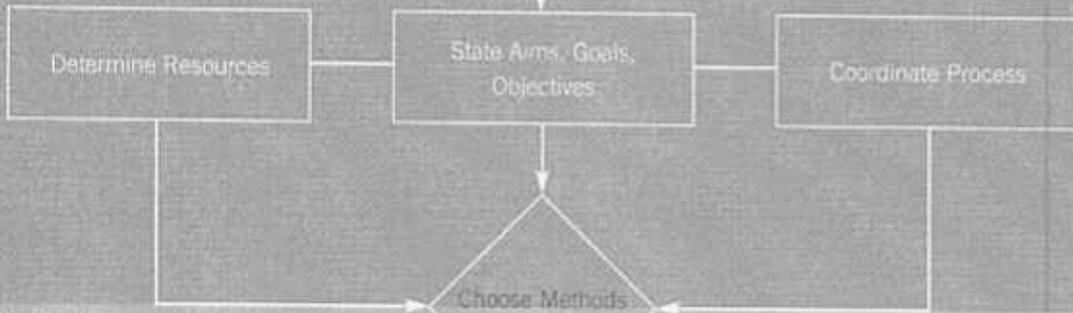
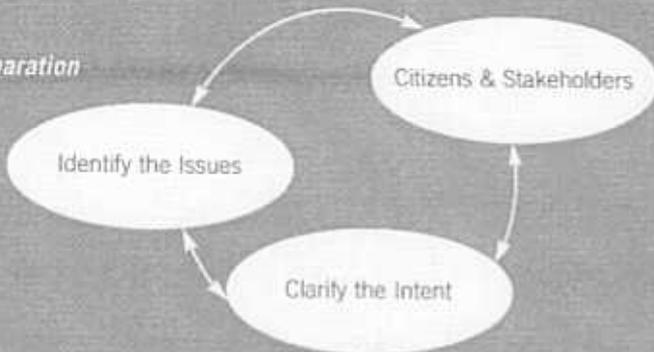
Figure 3: Model of Public Engagement



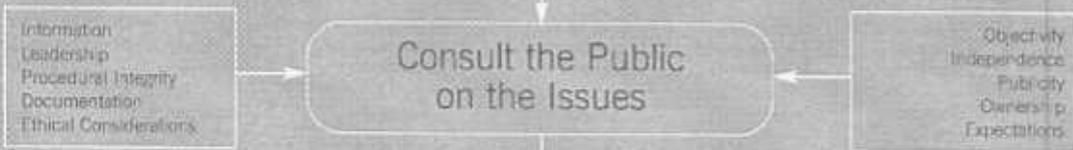
(Adapted from Coleman & Gätze, 2001:13)

Figure 4: Planning the Consultation

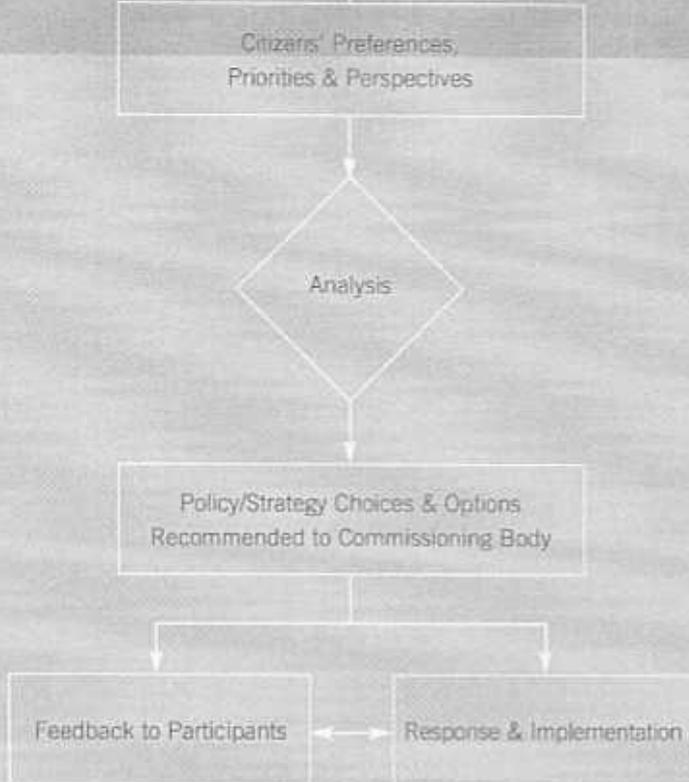
**PLANNING**  
*Context & Preparation*



**PRACTICE**  
*Conducting the Consultation Event*



**RESULTS**  
*Outputs & Outcomes*



## 2.4 Identifying the Stakeholders

The following questions may aid in identifying stakeholders:

- > Who is responsible for the issue?
- > Who might be affected by the issue (negatively or positively)?
- > Who are the representatives of those likely to be affected?
- > Who can make a contribution?
- > Who is likely to mobilise for or against the issue?
- > Who are the "voiceless" for whom special efforts may have to be made?
- > Whose absence from participation would detract from the final results?

After identifying the stakeholders, it is beneficial to relate each stakeholder to the issue by identifying:

- > Stakeholder expectations
- > The benefits to the stakeholder
- > What resources (and risks) the stakeholder will bring to the issue
- > The relationship between various stakeholders.

### Considering Community Groups

Identification of community groups and the initiation of communication may be aided by liaising with other departments, consultative and advisory councils, peak bodies and relevant representative organisations.

Consideration must be given to groups who may feel excluded from poorly conceived consultative processes, for example ethnic, Indigenous and remote communities, people with disabilities, seniors, women, youth and others. Whilst on occasion these groups feel that they are 'over-consulted', they also often feel that they are never listened to. Care must be taken to include them in appropriate ways.

The issues that confront society often impact most severely on young people. Providing creative opportunities for young people to participate and contribute is essential. This is particularly important given that the more traditional modes of participation often fail to include young people.

Some individuals may be restricted in their participation without special assistance. Their participation may be aided through the provision of travel assistance, payment for child-care facilities or through the provision of interpreters or audio-visual aids.

Similarly, in a state as large and sparsely populated as Western Australia, special consideration must be given to remote and regional communities to avoid these citizens feeling isolated and marginalised. Innovative methods may need to be developed to ensure the participation of remotely located citizens.

## 2.5 Coordinating those Involved

There is a need for coordination and cooperation across organisations, sectors and regions (and sometimes on a global basis) to limit duplication and administrative complexity, and to minimize the risks of consultation 'fatigue' for everyone involved.

It is important from the outset that all participants reach an agreement on both the aims and the parameters of the consultation, together with the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

Coordination involves managing relationships with:

- > Other parts of your own organisation and partner organisations
- > Those who will act on the results at policy and operational levels
- > Contractors assisting in the consultation or implementation
- > Participants such as experts or witnesses
- > Stakeholders.

## 2.6 Determining Resources Required - Time, Skills and Cost

### Timing

Successful consultations are implemented according to a well-defined schedule, particularly for those consultations designed to report on a specific issue. Sufficient time needs to be allocated to every stage of the consultation process to allow proper monitoring and due consideration of progress. Poorly planned consultations add to the level of cynicism some members of the community have towards government (and other) consultation initiatives. Consider the following points:

- > Having a realistic timetable is valuable for all participants. It can indicate what they can expect (short or long term commitment) and when. The timing of consultation may need to be adjusted to suit consultees' schedules, for example conducting consultation events after business hours, or outside of public or cultural/religious holidays.
- > Timing can also be important in a secondary way because some issues may be more prominent at particular times of the year (e.g. water consumption).
- > Ample time should be provided for consultees to participate throughout the consultation process, to become informed of the issues, reflect upon the information and make considered responses.
- > Consideration should be given to the meeting cycles of different organisations, and the time it takes for groups and individuals to be involved in formal discussions, debate and awareness raising.

### The Consultation Team

A skilled team is essential for planning, developing, executing, monitoring and evaluating a consultation. The team may come from within the organisation or may be contracted specifically for the purpose of the consultation project. There may be a need to offer additional training to staff to ensure that they have the pre-requisites necessary for effective consultation. These include knowledge, skills and understanding of:

- > Communication
- > Consensus building
- > Documentation
- > Evaluating and providing feedback
- > Evaluation
- > Facilitation
- > Group dynamics
- > Interpersonal relations
- > Knowledge of government processes and activities
- > Negotiation and conflict resolution
- > Problem solving
- > Public relations

### Developing a Budget

Where organisations are spending public money it is necessary to prepare a budget that provides for cost-effective ways to consult. Consultation need not be expensive - with resourcefulness consultations can be carried out with limited funds. Efficiently planned and budgeted consultations can deliver beneficial results for relatively low cost.

Some of the expenses that may be incurred include:

- > Advertising costs
- > Child or respite care
- > Consultant costs
- > Equipment
- > Parking, travel costs
- > Postal costs, delivery
- > Printing costs
- > Public address systems
- > Refreshments
- > Stationery
- > Travel reimbursements
- > Venue hire.

**It is false economy to allow insufficient resources for the consultation process.**

## 2.7 Choosing a Method

Different methods may be used to engage people in the consultation process. No one 'correct' method will suit every issue. Very rarely are 'pure' models adhered to. Using more than one method may increase the likelihood of gaining a more representative response. An appropriate choice must be made in each situation.

Choosing the method to be used will be determined by the purpose of the consultation and who is being consulted. It may also be determined by the level of expertise and experience the commissioning body has in conducting consultations.

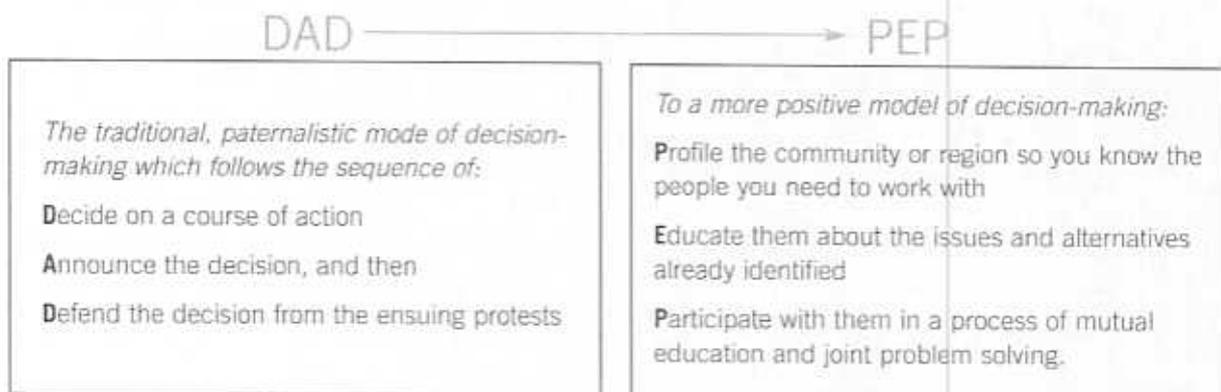
Some of the questions that will need to be answered before choosing a consultation method include:

- > What is the purpose of the consultation?
- > What information is required?
- > Who are the stakeholders?
- > How much information needs to be gathered from stakeholders?
- > Where are the stakeholders located (e.g. remote or rural communities)?
- > How much information needs to be given to stakeholders in order for them to provide considered input?
- > Are there special groups to be addressed (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse groups, ethnic or indigenous groups, people with a disability)?
- > What is the complexity of the issue?
- > What is the urgency of decision-making and how much time is available?
- > What is the extent of resources available (personnel, time, venues, finances, etc)?

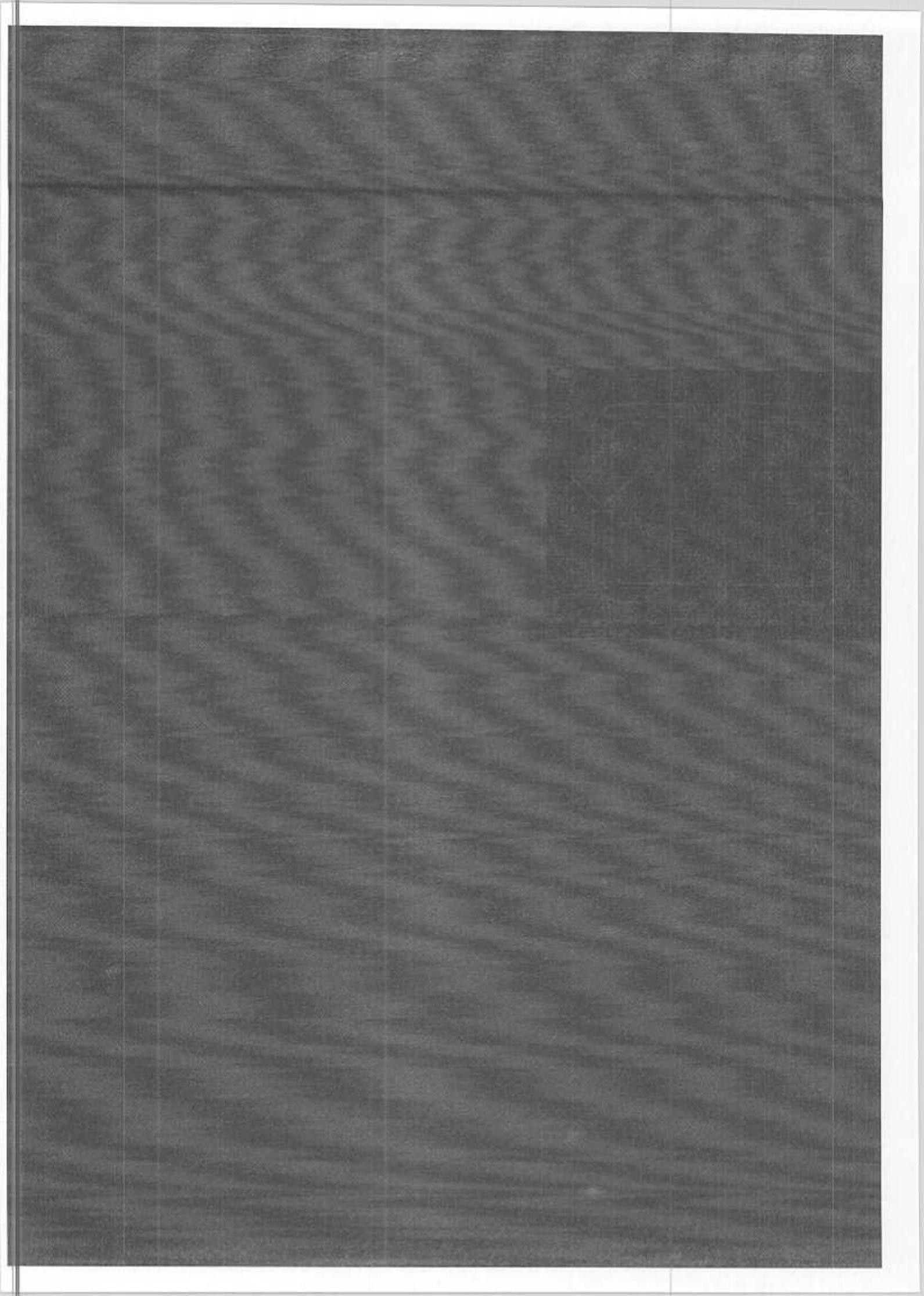
Appendix One of this guide presents a table of consultation methods, including a brief description and a list of some of the advantages and disadvantages for each type.

In the community and amongst decision-makers, levels of knowledge, understanding and commitment to consultation are changing, the table below reflects this changing attitude to consultation.

### From DAD to PEP?



(Source: Connor Development Services)



*Whilst much of the consultation process will be determined by the method chosen there are some aspects common to all. These are the important foundations for any effective consultation.*

### 3.0 Foundations for Effective Consultation



#### 3.1 A Statement of Intent

All participants need to understand the purpose of each consultation and so should be provided with a statement of intent. This statement should articulate the negotiable and non-negotiable items so that there is a clear understanding of the exact nature of the issues under consideration. The reasons for non-negotiable items need to be explained.

Being clear from the outset about what is, and what is not, under consideration will help to avoid unrealistic expectations.

The Statement of Intent should include the following elements:

- > Intentions and purpose of consultation (focus)
- > What is, and what is not open to consultation (scope of decisions, options and issues)
- > The range of stakeholders involved and their level of involvement
- > Roles and responsibilities of designated decision-maker/s

- > The organisation's commitment to the outcome
- > Background information providing the rationale for holding the consultation, including information on previous consultations
- > Information to assist consultees understand where the consultation fits within the organisation's/community's overall aims
- > Consultation ground rules outlining the process to be undertaken
- > A description of the methods proposed for consulting, evaluating and providing feedback
- > Consultation schedule or timeline
- > Commitment of the organisation to ensuring that special needs of citizens are accommodated
- > Contact details.

### **3.2 Make Information Accessible**

To facilitate community, group or individual participation and to allow for informed decision making it is vital that participants are provided with comprehensive and unbiased information on the issue under consideration. This may require involvement of a neutral party to ensure credibility. This information must be accessible to all potential participants and can be aided through:

- > Making it easy for people to participate - accessible venues, accessible information, accessible processes and accessible consulters
- > Using language that is clearly written and free from unnecessary jargon
- > Incorporating mechanisms to address differing levels of literacy in the community.
- > Being responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community, including different language needs and the needs of the visually and hearing impaired.

### **3.3 Choose Effective Leaders and Staff**

A consultation process can only be as good as the people involved in its implementation. It is therefore imperative to appoint skilled staff and to consider the following:

- > Effective leadership is vital
- > Personnel with skills such as facilitating, information dissemination, knowledge of the issues and so on are essential to keeping the consultation process on track
- > Enthusiasm and commitment from the consultation team will directly impact upon the success of the project
- > At times, there may be a need to bring specially skilled and/or experienced staff into the organisation through the use of consultants and contractors.

### **3.4 Ensure Procedural Integrity and Documentation**

Good consultation is documented. From the moment an issue has been identified as needing action, all aspects of the process should be documented. Documentation is the basis for procedural integrity - vital for maintaining credibility, accountability and transparency in the process.

For more detailed information on preparing consultation documents see Bartram (1997).

### **3.5 Maintain Objectivity and Independence**

Consultations will only be effective and useful if the information collected is a true reflection of the views and opinions of those consulted. Consultations must endeavour to obtain responses that accurately reflect the views of the participants. The following factors can benefit this process:

- > Provision of unbiased information
- > An independent and professional facilitator who is regarded by all parties as neutral
- > Expert witnesses
- > Use of appropriate data collection methods
- > Allowing consultees the freedom to determine options.

### 3.6 Publicise the Consultation

Effectively publicising the consultation is essential if you are to engage all stakeholders. Some of the methods that can be utilised include:

- > Media releases
- > Placing advertisements or articles in community, council and resident group newsletters, community magazines and newspapers
- > Agency or departmental newsletters or brochures, leaflets or flyers in places such as local shops, recreation centres and libraries
- > Using radio and television (particularly local and public access stations)
- > Accessing special interest groups who may have email lists or bulletin boards
- > Various websites.

### 3.7 Ensure Ethical Practice

The Public Sector Standards Commissioner has a general Code of Ethics that is based on the principles of justice, respect and responsible care. All consultations by State agencies must adhere to the Code of Ethics. The confidentiality of consultees must be respected. The process must be responsive to special needs, display integrity and honesty and must not undermine public confidence.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed a draft code of ethics (see Figure 5) specifically for consultations and public participation practitioners.

#### Figure 5: Code of Ethics

**Purpose:** The purpose of public participation is to make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders, including decision-makers.

**Role of Practitioner:** The role of the practitioner is to enhance the public's participation in the decision-making process and to assist the decision-maker in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.

**Trust:** A public participation practitioner should at all times encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the process and among the participants.

**Defining the Public's Role:** The public's role in the decision-making process should be carefully considered and accurately portrayed to the public.

**Openness:** Information relevant to the public's understanding or evaluation of a decision should be disclosed.

**Access to the Process:** All stakeholders should have the opportunity to take part in the public participation process. A stakeholder should not be given special privileges in the public participation process based on its sympathy for the decision maker's preferred alternative.

**Respect for Communities:** A public participation practitioner should avoid strategies that tend to polarize community interests or appear to divide and conquer.

**Advocacy:** In interactions with the public, the practitioner should provide a clear understanding of when the practitioner is acting as an advocate for the public participation process and when the practitioner is acting as an advocate for a particular interest, party, or project outcome.

**Commitments:** The practitioner has a responsibility to ensure that commitments made to the public by the decision maker are genuine and capable of implementation.

**Support of the Practice:** The experienced practitioner should participate in the development of new practitioners in the field and engage in efforts to educate decision makers and the public about the value and use of public participation.

(Adapted from IAP2, 2000)

### 3.8 Managing Expectations

Throughout the consultation process it is important to manage the expectations of both consultees and consulters.

Consultees who are well informed about the consultation process are better placed to have realistic expectations of the process and its outcomes. As long as consultees are informed at the outset of what they can and cannot expect, they are less likely to become frustrated with the process. Ideally, consultees should be informed upfront as to whether or not their views will be binding on decision-making authorities.

Additionally, it is inappropriate for consulters to expect that a consultation will simply be a "rubber stamping" or "buck passing" exercise for a particular initiative or program. The results gathered from consultation may not always correspond with organisational preferences.

**Open and accountable processes** are the key to managing expectations.

### 3.9 Encouraging a Sense of Ownership

Effective consultation can promote ownership of, and commitment towards, policy outcomes. Ownership does not only rest with the originators of consultation (the commissioning body) or with the consulters, rather it is shared between these two and with the consultees themselves. The shared ownership of the consultation process will create a sense of involvement and commitment to the end product or service.

People who have been listened to often become active stakeholders - "championing the cause" - leading to optimal results. For consultees, a sense of ownership of the consultation exercise is vital for not only their continued cooperation and interest but also for ensuring their contributions are both candid and considered.

Building a sense of ownership can be achieved through:

- > Involving stakeholders early in the process
- > Well-defined roles and responsibilities for all concerned
- > Open, timely and sincere communication
- > Continually providing feedback on the progress of the consultation
- > Effective follow up - turning responses into action, achieving results and outcomes
- > Proper reporting, accountability and responsibility
- > Monitoring and evaluation.

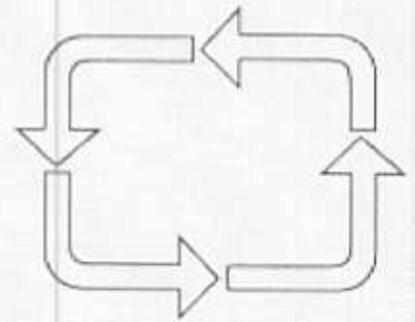
### 3.10 Mutual Respect and Honesty

Having respect for the legitimacy and views of all participants is essential when engaging in public consultation. All consultations should be based upon values of openness, trust, and transparency of purpose and process.

### 3.11 Be Aware of Potential Problems

Despite the demands for and advantages of consultation there are, nevertheless, concerns raised about its effectiveness and usefulness. Some of the potential problems commonly associated with consultations are:

- > Difficulties in gaining representative views, particularly if there are a few well resourced lobby groups
- > Disagreements within the organisations involved
- > Inability to reach an outcome acceptable to all
- > Incompatibility between organisational preferences and community views
- > Lack of trust amongst stakeholders
- > Poor participation
- > Unrealistic expectations



Usually, the 'output' of a consultation exercise refers to the substantive decisions, conclusions, or recommendations made. These substantive outputs can be evaluated and compared using a variety of criteria, including stakeholder satisfaction with the results, cost-effectiveness, or risk minimization. Evaluation of these outcomes is essential. Narrowly interpreting 'outcome' to refer only to substantive decisions misses some of the most important results of a consultation process. A more inclusive interpretation of outcomes includes the extent to which a consultation, and the wider project to which it relates, has achieved its original aims.



#### 4.0 Outputs and Outcomes

## 4.1 Analysis

To assess the results of consultation several factors must be considered. Prior to undertaking any analysis the original purpose and objectives of the consultation need to be revisited so that the analysis is firmly grounded in the original intent. Some consultations may raise new issues or may appear not to answer the original questions – suggesting that further consultation is required or that the original question was not fully defined. Factors to consider include:

- > Continuity of staff throughout the consultation is beneficial; those who have been involved from inception should be involved in assessing the results
- > Translating raw data into conclusions must allow for accountability - valid research methods and appropriate statistical techniques must be used
- > Analysis should commence as soon as possible after the consultation and should be completed promptly to maintain momentum
- > Conclusions and recommendations should be reported in a format that is accessible to all interested parties.

## 4.2 Feedback

Feedback to consultees should be provided throughout the consultation process to ensure their continued involvement. However, it is of vital importance for feedback to be provided soon after the analysis phase to help ensure integrity and credibility.

Feedback should acknowledge the contribution of both consulters and consultees. In keeping with a policy of openness it may be beneficial to provide transcripts of any deliberations that were recorded, making note of both consensus and dissent.

Feedback should be provided to consultees on any decisions that have been taken and should include the rationale behind these decisions. Any report should also outline how consultee input was used in the decision-making.

## 4.3 Response to Recommendations

The consultation commissioning body must respond to any views or recommendations put forward by consultees. Was each recommendation accepted in whole or in part, or was it rejected? For each outcome, it is highly advisable that the reasons for the decision are made clear and made publicly available. The public also needs to be informed about how the outcomes will be implemented and who will be responsible for monitoring and review.

## 4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation involves a two-pronged approach which assesses both the substantive outputs of the consultation while also reviewing the process. However, the focus here is on evaluation of the process.

The consultation project should be monitored throughout the duration of the process to ensure procedural integrity and ethical practice. By monitoring the project the consulting team can review and modify the process to take account of stakeholder concerns.

Evaluations can be carried out using a variety of techniques including questionnaires, interviews, focus groups or stakeholder panels. Questions should be asked of the participants regarding the planning, process and follow-up stages of the consultation.

Final evaluation should:

- > Determine the level of satisfaction of all participants in both the process and outcomes
- > Improve understanding of stakeholders perspectives
- > Provide an assessment of the costs and benefits to stakeholders
- > Provide conceptual learning to improve the understanding of how different consultation methods influence decision-making

- > Provide insights into the shortfalls of the consultation process - discrepancies between consultation aims and those actually achieved
- > Show accountability in accessing and justifying the costs and resource utilisation
- > Show the extent and quality of citizen participation and how it might influence future consultations
- > Show the impact of consultation on outcomes and decision-making.

Usually the outcomes of consultation can only be assessed in the context of the wider program or project to which they relate, as consultation is not an end in itself.

#### 4.5 Emerging Evaluation Techniques

There is considerable research being undertaken in various countries on the effective evaluation of consultation and other public participation processes, using indicators other than cost effectiveness, resource allocation or other substantive outputs.

Frewer, Rowe, Marsh and Reynolds (2001) have developed a set of nine 'evaluation criteria' that "form the basis for the development of methodologies to assess the effectiveness of different public participation exercises". These help to outline evaluation techniques that go beyond the traditional and somewhat limited analyses of previous methods (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Evaluation Criteria**

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Definition</i>
<b>Acceptance Criteria</b>	
<b>Representativeness</b>	The participants in the exercise should comprise a broadly representative sample of the affected population
<b>Independence</b>	The participation process should be conducted in an independent (unbiased) way
<b>Early Involvement</b>	The participants should be involved as early as possible in the process, as soon as value judgments become salient or relevant
<b>Influence</b>	The output of the procedure should have a genuine impact on policy
<b>Transparency</b>	The process should be transparent so that the relevant population can see what is going on and how decisions are being made
<b>Process Criteria</b>	
<b>Resource Accessibility</b>	Participants should have access to the appropriate resources to enable them to successfully fulfil their brief
<b>Task Definition</b>	The nature and scope of the participation task should be clearly defined
<b>Structured Decision Making</b>	The participation exercise should use/provide appropriate mechanisms for structuring and displaying the decision making process
<b>Cost Effectiveness</b>	The procedure should in some sense be cost effective from the point of view of the sponsors

(Source: Frewer, Rowe, Marsh and Reynolds 2001: 4)

Factors or indicators to be considered when evaluating a consultation include:

- > Accessibility to the decision-making process
- > Costs avoided for affected agencies
- > Diversity of citizens represented
- > Diversity of views expressed
- > Expectations met
- > Information exchange
- > Integration of concerns
- > Interests of all addressed
- > Mutual learning among participants
- > Mutual respect among participants
- > Opportunities for participation
- > Participation time costs for participants
- > Project/decision acceptability
- > Project/plan efficiency (duration of process)
- > Relationships enhanced
- > Special needs accommodated.

Participant feedback may also provide other criteria relevant to a particular consultation project.



## Appendix One: Consultation Methods

Methods and Models	Considerations	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>User Comments and Complaints</b></p> <p>Encourage feedback from users</p>	<p>Make feedback forms accessible</p>	<p>Provides input from those using the services</p> <p>Easy to set up</p> <p>Provides information about service's weaknesses and strengths</p>	<p>Not representative</p> <p>Essentially reactive to existing systems</p>
<p><b>Staff Feedback and Suggestions</b></p> <p>Encourage feedback and suggestions from frontline staff who deal with the public</p>	<p>Train staff to deal with comments and complaints</p> <p>Establish systems for obtaining feedback</p>	<p>Shows you value staff and are open to suggestions</p> <p>Valuable source of information on service use and users</p>	<p>Relies on staff effort</p> <p>Time consuming</p> <p>Doesn't necessarily provide representative views</p>
<p><b>Surveys and Questionnaires</b></p> <p>Inquiries sent randomly to sample population to gain specific information for statistical validation</p>	<p>Ensure statistically valid results are needed before making investment</p> <p>Survey/questionnaire should be professionally developed and administered to avoid bias</p> <p>Most suitable for general attitudinal surveys</p>	<p>Provides input from individuals who would be unlikely to attend meetings</p> <p>Provides input from cross-section of public not just activists</p> <p>Statistically tested results are more persuasive with political bodies and the general public</p>	<p>Response rate is generally low</p> <p>For statistically valid results, can be labour intensive and expensive</p> <p>Level of detail may be limited</p> <p>May be perceived as a public relations tool</p>
<p><b>Small Neighbourhood Meetings</b></p> <p>Small meetings within neighbourhood usually at a person's home</p>	<p>Issue relevant to neighbourhood</p> <p>Make sure staff are very polite and appreciative</p> <p>May need to be aware of other neighbourhood issues</p>	<p>Relaxed setting is conducive to effective dialogue</p> <p>Maximises two-way communication</p>	<p>Requires a lot of labour to reach many people</p>
<p><b>Open Public Meetings</b></p> <p>Formal meeting with scheduled agenda</p>	<p>Accessible and convenient public location</p> <p>Publicise event</p> <p>Clearly defined objective</p> <p>Defined meeting structure</p> <p>Provide proper staffing and facilitation</p>	<p>Opportunity to provide information and obtain feedback</p> <p>Demonstrates commitment to public consultation</p> <p>Builds relationships with local community</p> <p>Relatively inexpensive</p>	<p>Not representative</p> <p>Localised knowledge only</p> <p>Large group format may be a barrier to some</p>

**Methods and Models****Considerations****Advantages****Disadvantages****Representative Groups**

Made up of people with particular interest in the issue. Contact may be through forums or discussion groups

Find relevant groups, what they do and who they represent

Determine best contact method

Access to body of research

Consultation with knowledgeable group

Allows in-depth discussion

Relatively inexpensive

Opportunity for individuals to capture discussion

Not necessarily statistically representative

Can be time consuming

Large group format may be a barrier to some

**Future Search Conferences**

Considering future scenarios and ways to influence outcomes in uncertain situations

Independent and skilled facilitator

No pre-set proposals

Seeks consensus

Allows an exchange of information

Many viewpoints can be heard

Resource intensive

Can be captured by large interest groups

Difficulty in reaching a consensus

**Face to Face Interviews**

One-to-one meetings with stakeholders to gain information on public concerns and perspectives

Where feasible, interviews should be conducted in-person, particularly when considering candidates for citizens committees

Take advantage of opportunity for citizens to input on how they participate

Use trained researchers

Provides opportunities to understand public concerns and issues

Provides opportunity to learn how to best communicate with public

Can be used to evaluate potential citizen committee members

Scheduling multiple interviews can be time consuming and expensive

Interviewers must engender trust or risk negative response to format

Not necessarily representative

**Focus Groups**

8-10 people led by trained facilitator in 'one-off' discussion on particular topic

Selection of group is of primary importance

May need to have several groups to investigate views from different perspectives

Value the input and commitment of group members

Requires skilled facilitator

Rewards/incentives may be offered

Allows for brainstorming of ideas

Can include those who may usually be excluded (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse groups)

Allows in-depth discussion

May be costly

Lack of confidentiality

Qualitative information only

Difficulty in prioritising issues

Does not lend itself easily to discussing sensitive issues

**Public Hearings**

Formal meetings with scheduled presentations offered

Try to use informal meetings immediately before to build knowledge base

Provides opportunity for public to speak without rebuttal

Meets legal requirements

Puts comments on record

Does not foster dialogue

Creates 'us vs. them' feeling

Minority groups not easily included

**Community Facilitators**

Use qualified individuals in local community organisations to conduct project outreach

Define roles, responsibilities and limitations up front

Select and train facilitators carefully

Promotes community-based involvement

Capitalises on existing networks

Enhances project credibility

Can be difficult to control information flow

Can build false expectations

Information capture can be difficult

## Methods and Models

## Considerations

## Advantages

## Disadvantages

### Advisory Committees

A group of representative stakeholders assembled to provide public input to the planning process.

Define roles and responsibilities up front

Be forthcoming with information

Use a consistently credible process

Interview potential committee members in person before selection

Use third party facilitation

Ensure members communicate with their constituencies

Provides detailed analyses for project issues

Participants gain understanding of other perspectives, leading toward compromise

General public may not embrace committee's recommendations

Members may not achieve consensus

Sponsors must accept need for 'give-and-take'

Time and labour intensive

### User Panels

A small group regularly assembled to debate or provide input on specific issues over a long period of time

Small size - no more than twelve

Have clear objective and time frame

Useful sounding board

Relatively quick feedback

Continuing dialogue

Can build credibility if all sides are represented

May provoke media attention

Gives user perspective

May provoke unwanted media attention

Can polarise issues if not conceived and moderated well

Users can become too closely linked to organisation

Often excludes minority groups

### Citizens' Panels

Comprise between 500 and 2500 citizens who are representative of population. Used as sounding board to test, assess and develop proposals over an extended period of time

Panel members need to be made clear of their roles

Can be conducted in partnership with other connected organisations/agencies

Track views over time

Can be directed towards particular targets

Access to wide range including minority groups

Resource intensive in initial stages

Maintaining interest for panel members

Replacing members throughout process

### Citizen Juries

Small group of representative citizens empanelled to learn about an issue, cross examine witnesses, and make a recommendation. Always non-binding with no legal standing

Requires skilled moderator

Commissioning body must follow recommendations or explain why

Be clear about how results will be used

Consensus not required

Great opportunity to develop deep understanding of an issue

Provides informed feedback

Public can identify with representative citizens

Resource intensive

Expensive

Not suitable for all issues

Extensive preparatory work

May not be representative

### Consensus Conferences

10-16 panel members come together to research a complex issue and then question expert witnesses before reaching a consensus decision

Requires high level of commitment from panel members

Requires compilation of complex material for preparatory days

Make available expert witnesses as determined by panel

Requires skilled and independent moderator

Panel determine questions to ask witnesses leading to greater impartiality

Open to public - transparent

Provides informed deliberation

High level commitment from panel

Resource intensive

Costly

Extensive preparatory work

Not representative

May be difficulty in reaching a consensus

**Methods and Models****Considerations****Advantages****Disadvantages****Deliberative Opinion Polls**

Measures informed opinion on an issue during a 2-3 day meeting. Uses statistically significant sample

Do not expect or encourage participants to develop a shared view

Requires skilled facilitator

Polling of an informed group

Exposure to different backgrounds, arguments and views

Resource intensive

Can be costly to set-up and pay expenses of those attending

Not statistically representative

**Written Consultation Exercises**

Inviting public submissions for written comments on specific proposals

Provide full details of issue for which views are sought

Publicise event

May need multiple format for documents

Allow ample time to respond

Provides detailed information on the issue for those interested

Elicits a considered view

Resource intensive

May have poor response rate

Lengthy process

**Open Days  
Community Exhibitions**

Informal events to inform citizens about an organisation

Locate suitable venue

Publicise the event

Provide information displays

Timing is important

Gives public flexibility to attend

Allows contact with public and can provide ad-hoc feedback

Publicise organisation

May not be representative

Feedback may be limited

Difficulty in recording responses

**Consensus Building Exercises**

Help people reach consensus by focussing on the issues

Requires experienced mediators. Typically used to bring stakeholders together to reach consensus over an issue

Round tables are one approach where adversarial groups are brought together

Helps people reach solutions they can all support

Allows for different viewpoints to be expressed

High emotional commitment

**Citizen Advisory Committees**

Intended to represent broader public views

Benefits from balanced committee

Can be made up of variety of organisations from government and public

Advice of committee should influence decision making

Informs public, aids trust in government, reduces conflict

Not always representative group

**Referenda**

Issue put to popular vote

Initiated by government

Issue should stand on its own (not complex question)

Results usually binding

Incites discussion

All voters have equal influence

Results cannot be ignored

Expensive

Potential for undue influence by organisations with greater resources

Limited use

**Information Technologies**

Using information technology as a means to inform and gather feedback (e.g. calls for submissions, completing online questionnaires etc)

Access to computers may be limited

Cost effective after initial outlay

Quick response rate

Easy to keep information current

Can incorporate large amount of data

Won't reach everyone

Technical problems

Requires expert staff

Results can be unrepresentative

## Appendix 2: Checklist

### Do we have:

- Organisational commitment to consultation and to the outcomes derived?
- Mechanisms and resources to document the full extent of the consultation?
- Adequate time for consultation built into project timelines?
- A shared understanding, from all parties involved, of the scope and objectives of the consultation?
- An understanding from all stakeholders of what is negotiable and open to change and what is not.
- Agreement from all parties concerned as to whether the focus is on gaining agreement on the process for consultation or on the outcome of the consultation process?
- The ability to coordinate information and actions across the organisations involved?
- Relevant information that is readily accessible to all members of the community - including information on the issue and on the consultation process?
- The financial and technical resources to undertake the consultation?
- Practical/logistical matters identified and resourced?
- Appropriately skilled human resources to undertake the consultation?
- The credibility to engage the community?
- Open and accountable processes that can withstand public scrutiny?
- Community understanding of the level of input expected of them?
- Opportunities for engaging the community in debate on the issue?
- All potential stakeholders identified?
- Adequate publicity in place to ensure all potential stakeholders are aware of the consultation?
- An understanding of possible barriers to participation and appropriate strategies in place?
- Mechanisms in place for monitoring the consultation process and the organisational flexibility to make changes if required?
- Strategies in place for evaluating feedback from the consultation?
- Strategies in place for providing feedback to participants?
- A clear understanding with stakeholders regarding their level of involvement in implementation of outcomes?
- An evaluation of the consultation process built into project timelines?

### Appendix 3: Sample Evaluation Questions

The following questions may assist in designing protocols to evaluate the success of the consultation process. Some questions are more appropriately directed to participants, some to the consultation team.

#### 1. Planning

- Were the aims of the consultation made clear?
- What parameters were defined at the outset?
- Did participants have input into the design of the consultation?
- Was there a clear understanding of the expectations of all parties?
- Were the consulters trained in the skills required for effective consultation?
- Was financial assistance made available to enable consultees to participate?
- Was the outcome determined beforehand?
- Were other departments consulted/coordinated?
- Was there agreement on the approach to be taken?
- Were there enough opportunities to allow a full range of views to be expressed?

#### 2. Process

- Were all stakeholders identified at the outset and involved in the consultation?
- Were the stakeholders representative of the affected population?
- How were roles and responsibilities made clear for all involved?
- Was participation voluntary?
- Were independent, skilled and neutral facilitators used?
- Was information made accessible to all including special groups?
- Was the process fully documented?
- Did the process maintain objectivity and independence?
- Was there an acceptance of the diverse values, interests and knowledge of all participants?
- Was there respect for the confidentiality of information shared?
- How was flexibility integrated into the process?
- Was enough time allocated for the project?
- Did participants have the opportunity to provide feedback throughout the process and was it acted upon?

#### 3. Outcome

- Did the consultation produce reliable information?
- Was the collected information objectively analysed by skilled personnel?
- Was there a sense of shared ownership of the process and outcome?
- Was there a commitment to implement the outcome?
- Was feedback provided to participants?
- How did participants express their satisfaction or otherwise with the process?

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