

What, Why and How to Involve Others in Your Decisions



Public Participation for **Decision Makers**

iap²
international association
for public participation

www.iap2.org



The IAP2 Foundations in Public Participation

Beginning in 1992, IAP2 has offered diverse, high quality training for public participation professionals in conjunction with its annual conference. In response to a growing demand from the public participation community, IAP2 developed the IAP2 Foundations in Public Participation for beginning through advanced professionals. This five-day set of courses has been offered since 1999. The program offers a broad-based learning experience covering the foundations of public participation and provides useful and effective tools that professionals around the world can use to implement customized and effective programs.

The courses are:

- Planning for Effective Public Participation:¹ three days
- Techniques for Effective Public Participation: two days

Upon completion of both courses, participants are awarded a Certificate in Public Participation from IAP2. Courses are offered periodically by licensed trainers worldwide; visit IAP2's website for dates and locations. Contact IAP2 to discuss training for groups of 15 or more.

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You can benefit from additional IAP2-sponsored classes that complement and supplement IAP2's Foundations Program and meet the need for continuing professional development. IAP2 works with senior professionals and trainers to identify courses that meet our quality standards and provide professionals with the depth and breadth of knowledge necessary to develop effective public participation programs.

Contact IAP2 for more information about the Emotion, Outrage and Public Participation course or to propose a course for the Professional Development Series.

For More Information

Opportunities exist for experienced professionals to become IAP2 trainers. Visit www.iap2.org or email iap2hq@iap2.org for more information about IAP2 training and trainer licensing.

¹ Planning for Effective Public Participation is a prerequisite for the Techniques course.



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The International Association for Public Participation gratefully acknowledges the contributions of many individuals in the development of the Foundations Program.

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IAP2 International Federation
PO Box 270723
Louisville, CO 80027
USA

email: iap2hq@iap2.org
www.iap2.org



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COURSE GOALS AND AGENDA



Course Goals

At the conclusion of this course, decision makers will have learned:

- How public participation ties into their decision-making processes
- When and why to have the public participate in their decisions
- The decision maker's unique role and commitment
- Key concepts that must be considered to be effective when involving others

Agenda

- What is public participation?
- Why involve the public? What are the risks, benefits, and costs associated with public participation?
- When wouldn't you involve the public?
- Critical components and considerations for effective public participation:
 - Clarify the decision and decision-making process
 - Develop a full understanding of who needs to be involved
 - Define the appropriate level of public participation
 - Embrace the core values of public participation
 - Design your public participation process, reflecting values and resources
 - Evaluate and adapt, continuously
- Roles and commitments
- Summary and evaluation

The core content and learning outcomes of *Public Participation for Decision Makers* are addressed in all sessions of the course; however, examples provided may vary depending on the personal experiences of the trainer delivering the session, and the collective, specific needs and interests of class participants.



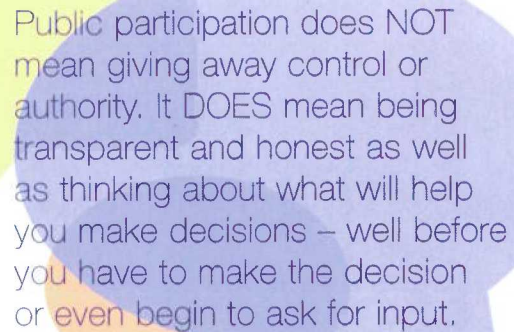
WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

IAP2 views public participation as any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses public input to make decisions.

While there is an element of dispute resolution in all public participation, the essence of public participation is to begin a participatory process before disputes arise. Public participation includes all aspects of identifying problems, developing alternatives, and making decisions.

Public participation uses tools and techniques that are common to a number of dispute resolution and communication fields.

Public participation includes a range of levels of public impact or involvement on a project or decision. Different levels of participation reflect different objectives and carry different promises to the public. Different public participation approaches and tools contribute to the varying levels of impact.



Public participation does NOT mean giving away control or authority. It DOES mean being transparent and honest as well as thinking about what will help you make decisions – well before you have to make the decision or even begin to ask for input.

– IAP2

Who Do We Mean by ‘the Public’?

When we speak about the “public” in public participation, we mean any groups and individuals that are affected by or interested in your decision or project. This might include government agencies, businesses, associations, nonprofit organizations, interest groups, elected officials, indigenous peoples, community groups, single individuals, and people or groups within your own organization. Different individuals or groups may have different levels of interest and involvement.

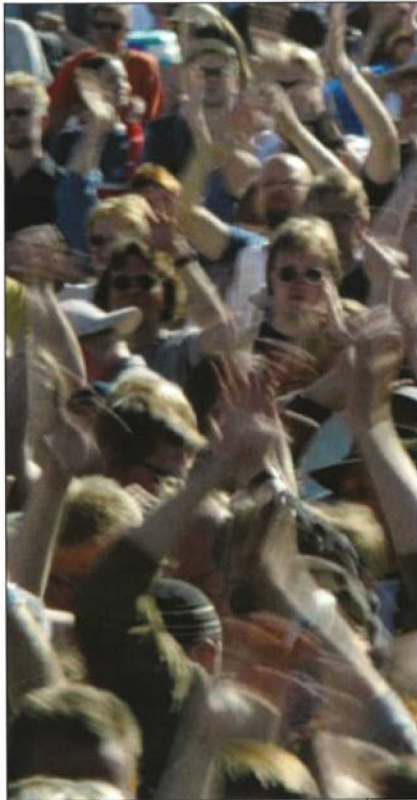


IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.



WHY OR WHY NOT INVOLVE THE PUBLIC?



Why Involve the Public?

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INVOLVING THE PUBLIC?

There are four reasons you might be motivated to involve the public:

1. It is required.
2. You are frustrated or even desperate.
3. You believe there is some value.
4. You will get some advantage from doing so.

Reason No. 1 to Involve the Public: It is Required

Many programs, laws, and rules require some level of public participation. These are the bare minimum requirements to have a legally defensible process. If you do not meet these requirements, project proponents can have your decision stopped or at least delay its implementation. This often results in significant additional work, expense, and delay.

Rarely are these requirements written to provide maximum benefit for the decision, the decision-maker, or the stakeholders. A law may require a public hearing, but that does NOT mean you can or should ONLY hold a public hearing. The other benefits of public participation may dictate a more thorough public process.



Reason No. 2 to Involve the Public:
You are Frustrated or Even Desperate

Oftentimes decision makers try to move forward with an initiative only to have it blocked – blocked by angry citizens, protestors, legislators, courts, or in some other way. Decision makers become frustrated by an inability to “get things done.” Perhaps you’ve had this experience.

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

Sometimes known as “the veto,” concerned individuals and groups have many available tools and the increasing knowledge and sophistication to slow down or even stop your decision making. They might seek legislative action to undo your decision, or remove your responsibility and control of the decision. They might physically disrupt a project, perhaps even endangering safety. They may create a public relations nightmare for you and your organization. They may start a campaign to remove an elected official from office, either during the next election or through a recall election.

Often when decision makers and others have a particularly controversial or complicated proposal or project, the tendency is to be more closed and conduct less public participation. This can exacerbate the agitation of those opposed to the project and add to the difficulty.

Public participation can help get it right the first time. If people have had their issues addressed and considered throughout the process, the decisions should better meet their needs. Similarly, if the decision-making process, through public participation, has met their procedural needs, they should be more supportive of the decision. This diminishes the capacity of someone to stop a decision late in the decision-making process or even in the implementation phase.

For example, many lawsuits to stop or delay a project are aimed less at the actual decision and more at failures in the decision-making process – options were not considered, meetings were not public or properly announced, analysis was flawed.

See the example case on Page 6.





CASESTUDY



A New Pool?

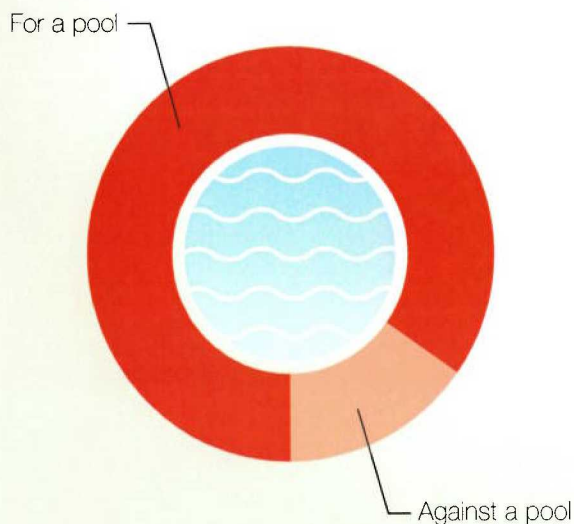
The 1992 Madison, Wisconsin, pool fiasco illustrates how lack of good involvement during planning can lead to delays and difficulties. Madison's Parks Commission had been studying establishing public pools around the city. The first was to be located at a city park along one of the lakes. The commission did not adequately involve the community in deciding whether to build a pool, nor in setting the criteria for determining its location and design.

Although most Madison residents seemed to want a public pool, many were upset with the chosen location, which would have resulted in the loss of woods along a lakeshore and would have required kids to cross a busy thoroughfare. Grassroots opposition led the way to a referendum. The referendum, which passed easily, required the city to hold a referendum on any construction project that costs more than \$500,000 and is near the lakefront.

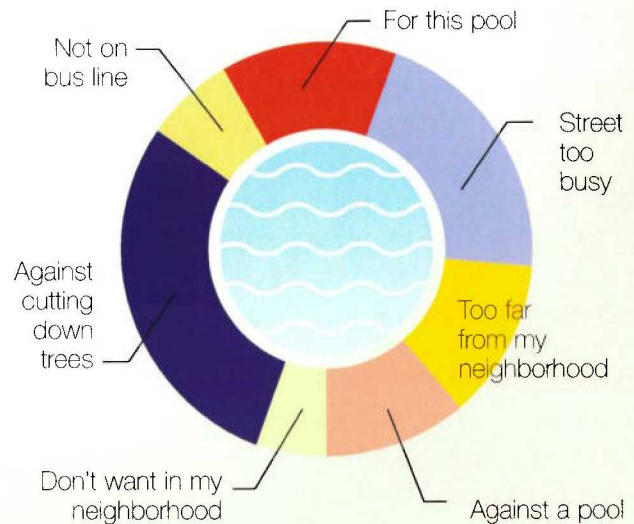
The referendum not only killed the proposal for this pool but also the other pools that were being studied. Private donations totaling \$800,000 had to be returned. The city estimated the newly passed referendum would force 6- and 12-month delays on other projects, including a golf course expansion already proposed at the time of the referendum. It nearly prevented the building of a Frank Lloyd Wright designed convention center.

In the case of the pool, the city had not involved the public, particularly in the early steps of decision making. Many liked the idea of a pool, but few liked the idea of that specific pool. The public exercised its veto, killing the project completely.

Public Sentiment before Specific Proposal

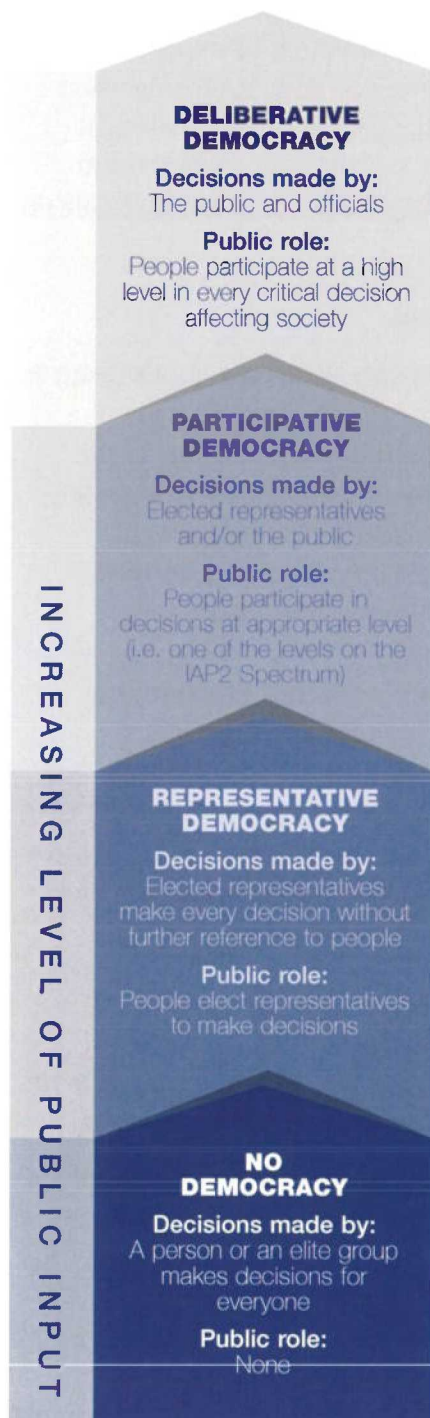


Public Sentiment after Specific Proposal





The Continuum of Democracy



Reason No. 3 to Involve the Public:

You Believe There is Some Value in Doing So

Believe it or not, public participation can make your job easier. It can help you avoid the costs, complications, and delays from “the veto.”

Public participation can also actually result in better decisions – decisions that better meet the needs of the situation and all of those who will be affected by it. These decisions are more likely to be sustainable.

Increased Democratic Value

Democratic principles embrace the philosophy that people have the right to influence what affects them. Public participation builds upon the value democracy brings to a society.

Government agencies and officials manage the public’s resources and services. Business decisions similarly affect the public and those public resources. Elected officials “do the public’s business” by enacting laws and setting public policy directions. Thus, involving the public and seriously considering their input and needs is ethically the right thing to do. Public participation provides a method for incorporating the public’s values and needs into such decisions, resulting in more responsive and democratic governance.

Increased Value of the Process

Public participation can make the decision-making process easier, not harder. Although the front-end planning can be lengthier and more complicated, subsequent steps are often more efficient and some sources of delays can be avoided.

Good public participation improves decision-making processes by:

- Providing an early warning system. Participation by the public early on and throughout the planning or decision-making process provides early warning of certain issues, options or opportunities. Generally, the sooner such information comes to light, the more useful it will be to you in your process and the less likely you will need to undo earlier work and modify decisions.



Consider ...

What might members of the public contribute – reactions, perspectives, considerations – that you would miss without them?

- **Creating better understanding of the task.** For an effective decision-making process, both the decision makers and the public need to fully understand the problem, situation, or opportunity and the available options. Public participation helps the decision-making process because it clarifies the definition of problem, it provides a forum for idea and concern sharing, it requires clear and accurate information, and it brings people together to focus on the issue.

Increased Value of Results and Decisions

Not surprisingly, the process improvements discussed above result in better decisions.

- **More information.** A public participation process brings more information into a decision. It adds useful information to a decision beyond the scientific knowledge an agency or experts might provide. Local knowledge can provide important perspectives, information, and history. Social, economic, and institutional components can be added to the ecological framework.
- **More perspectives.** The participation by a range of interested people adds more perspectives and expands options, thus enhancing the decision. You can create a decision that meets the needs and considers the concerns of more people, if they have been involved in its formation.
- **Increased mutual understanding.** Public participation provides a forum for both decision makers and stakeholders to better understand the range of issues and viewpoints. Thus, it broadens their own knowledge base and their understanding of other viewpoints, needs, and aspirations as they contribute to the decision. Feedback on potential impacts. By providing feedback on the potential impacts of draft or proposed decisions, public participation can provide a way to learn what impacts your decision will or might have before it is final.



Have faith in the value and wisdom of people's voices.

– IAP2



Reason No. 4 to Involve the Public:
You will Gain Some Advantage from Doing So

Involving the public can provide you with several direct advantages:

- **Managing single-issue viewpoints:** Because public participation illuminates many issues and many viewpoints, it can help manage single-issue viewpoints. When people partake in an interactive process with others who have a broad range of perspectives and values, they generally become more aware and appreciative of the challenge of balancing needs and making decisions in complex situations. While their zeal for their issue will not diminish, they may allow space for consideration of other issues and needs.
- **Building a motivated force:** Typically, when people help us solve problems, make decisions, or create plans, they develop ownership and a stronger stake in those initiatives. Frequently, they will then become stronger advocates and help bring the decisions to life. This may take the form of political advocacy, volunteerism, partnering, publicity, and securing funding.
- **Using free consultants:** In one sense, people you involve serve as free consultants to your project. They may bring technical expertise, first-hand knowledge of an initiative, specific knowledge about how decisions will affect certain population segments, local experience and history, or other specialized experience.
- **Building relationships:** Asking, considering, and involving people in work and decisions that affect them will naturally create and enhance relationships with them. These relationships may prove a useful foundation and resource on other work later.



Why Would You Not Involve Others in Your Decision?

Do not ask people for their input if you are not likely to listen to their opinions or consider their thoughts when you make your decision. Do not imply they will have some level of impact if they will not. But recognize that if the issue is controversial and if people will be significantly interested in or affected by your decision, people can find a way to become involved ... sometimes through legal action, sometimes through public demonstration, sometimes through direct action, and sometimes politically.

If there is a reason why you are not considering outside input in your decision, be clear about your reasons.

Tie your decision to the IAP2 Spectrum (Page 3). Read the promises there. If you can only promise to keep people informed, do not promise to involve people at a level that implies they will have more impact on the decision.

CASESTUDY



Consulting on Hunting Rules

In the early 1990s, a chief conservation warden was hearing reports from his staff of multiple near-miss accidents toward the end of the hunting day due to low visibility. Because of concern for human safety, the chief warden proposed ending the hunting day 15 minutes earlier, a change in state administrative rules.

He took the proposal to the annual conservation hearings, designed to allow people across the state to weigh in on proposed rule changes. The hunting public overwhelmingly voted against the proposed change.

The chief warden felt he had to make the change anyway. He feared for human safety and felt it was his responsibility and duty to make this change. He apologized to the hunting organizations and stated he never should have taken the proposal to a hearing since he felt he needed to make the change regardless of the public's opinion. Many were very angry about his decision.

The rest of the story: When this chief warden retired and a new person filled the position, he reversed this unpopular decision!



CRITICAL COMPONENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To design and carry out effective public participation, certain components and considerations are critical. Your staff or contractors may hold primary responsibility for these features. As the decision maker, you need to be aware of and must understand these critical elements so you can be comfortable with the role of the public in the process of your decision. In addition, understanding these elements will help you to adequately manage those with primary responsibility for public participation activities. IAP2 believes that good public participation results in better decisions.

Some of the critical components and considerations are as follows:

1. **Clarify the decision and decision-making process.** Get agreement on what is/are the issue(s) on the table.
2. **Develop full understanding of who needs to be involved.** Be sure all the players and critical issues are considered.
3. **Define the appropriate level of public participation.** Make appropriate promises and keep them.
4. **Understand and accept the core values of public participation.** Make sure your approach and process meets the needs of the participants as well as those of your organization. Understand the ethics that guide the work of public participation practitioners.
5. **Design your public participation process, reflecting values and resources.** Public participation must be planned and integrated with the decision-making process.
6. **Evaluate and adapt – continuously.**



Critical Components and Consideration No. 1: *Clarify the Decision and Decision-Making Process*

Before you can effectively decide if and how to involve the public or others in your decision, you must first be clear on what the decision is and how it will be made.

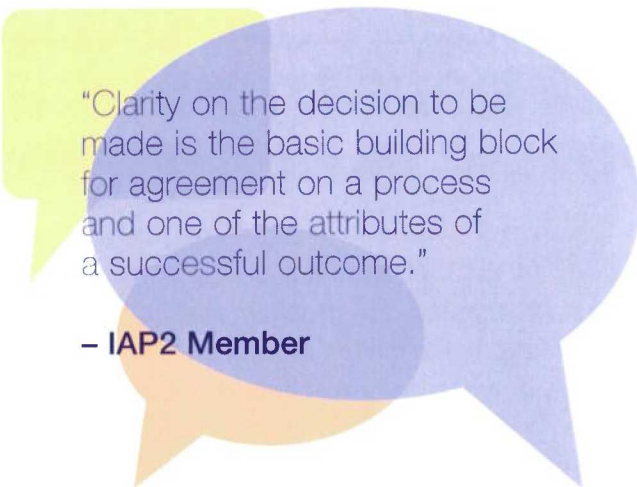
Clarify the Decision

You must agree on the problem to be solved, the decision to be made, or the opportunity to be explored. You may have a different perspective than your staff. Often, the publics will have different perspectives as well. It is difficult to reach agreement on approaches and solutions if people do not first agree on the issue at hand.

Your organization will need to work with those interested and affected to get clear understanding of the scope of the issue to be evaluated and considered.

If you cannot be clear on what the decision is, you will have trouble identifying your decision-making process or getting valuable and useful input to your decision. The process will be inefficient as you and the stakeholders spend time talking about different or irrelevant matters. Confusion will lead to distrust and, perhaps, unnecessary concerns.

- What are the interests and concerns that can be addressed by this process?
- What are the interests and concerns that cannot be addressed by this process?
- What is the role of the public in helping to determine this?



"Clarity on the decision to be made is the basic building block for agreement on a process and one of the attributes of a successful outcome."

– IAP2 Member





What's the Decision About?

Unlikely Alliance

In 1971 in Durham, North Carolina, an unlikely pair was charged with co leading a committee to integrate the city's schools. Ann Atwater, a militant African-American community and civil rights leader, and C. P. Ellis, a low-income white man who was president of the local Ku Klux Klan, were bitter enemies. After working together for some time, the two discovered their commonalities and redefined the problem together. They realized their common problem was "how to improve the education of kids in low-income neighborhoods," an issue which touched each of them deeply and personally.

Air Quality Permit

When making a decision about an air quality permit for a proposed medical waste and tire incinerator, the agency could only consider impacts on air quality. But the public was also concerned about traffic, infectious diseases, and land-use impacts on their town.

Utility Company

When a utility company was working with a mountaintop community, the company discovered it had been talking about where to run the power line, but the community had been talking about how to get power to their town ... and these were not the same discussion.

Land Swap

When a federal military facility wanted to expand its bombing range, it proposed swapping some of its land for some adjacent county-owned forestland. The natural resources agency's responsibilities extended to the ecological integrity of the forest and, based on that integrity, would rule on whether the swap was acceptable. The public, however, cared mostly about the potential for increased bombing practice activities.

Coyotes vs. Lambs

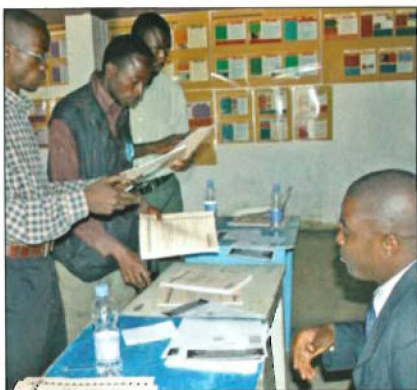
In a rural area, sheep ranchers wanted federal regulators to legalize use of a chemical called 1084, which was a promising method for killing coyotes that had been preying on their lambs. Ranchers defined the problem as "how to legalize 1084." The state wildlife agency sympathized with ranchers but was concerned about impacts on endangered birds and defined the problem as "how to kill coyotes." Local environmentalists worried about impacts of 1084 and saw coyotes as part of the natural environment and believed the problem was "how to save the lambs."

A sustainable agriculture advocate might define the issue as "how to support the agricultural economy so people can live and ranch in the area without harming the environment."



Caution!

Identifying the issues your process will address will not necessarily make issues it will not address disappear. Some people will continue to raise issues over which you have no control. They will do so because they are frustrated or because it is a good strategy for them in light of their objectives.



Some Strategies

What can you do when everyone sees the problem or decision differently?

- Design your involvement process to work toward common understandings and definitions. Often this involves enlarging the definition of the problem (see examples on Page 13). People must be careful not to make the problem too big to be addressed and may have to agree to work on smaller pieces.
- Identify and clarify what problems and issues your process will and will not address and why. Let people know where and how their other issues might be addressed – if there is another agency, level of government, process, or organization that can address their concerns. Do not dismiss someone's issues, aspirations or concerns, but help the person understand why this process is not addressing them.
- Many times, a problem or proposal has multiple decision makers. For example, a proposal for a new facility may involve decisions by the project proponent, the state or provincial environmental agency, local zoning boards, sewerage districts, a transportation department, federal agencies, a tax incentive agency, and elected officials.

The various decision makers could work together in a more coordinated process, particularly for working with the public. For example, a state environmental agency may be able to coordinate with local officials who make land-use decisions or to encourage a project proponent to work to address other public concerns. This linking and coordination of decision processes will require up-front work and bridging multiple organizational missions and cultures. However, the public will find it easier to participate in one unified process than in multiple disjointed processes.

- A project proponent could work with the affected communities and stakeholders – in advance – addressing the range of concerns and modifying a proposal (e.g., before approaching the multiple jurisdictions to seek permits and approvals).

If the proponent or another party that could address some of the public's issues that are outside the scope of your process, you can encourage that entity to be responsive to these added concerns. For example, the owner of a business may be willing voluntarily to take steps to reduce noise, make the facility more aesthetically pleasing, or conduct additional health monitoring, in the interest of good community relations, even if no authority could require such steps.



Clarify how the Decision will be Made

If a decision process exists, write it out explicitly. What are the steps, timing, and responsibilities from beginning to end?

Your public participation process must be integrated into the decision-making process. Each step in the decision process is a potential opportunity to involve others in some way.

If a process does not exist, you must develop one. Clarify who and how decisions will be made and who will make them. Include any intermediary decisions in your description.

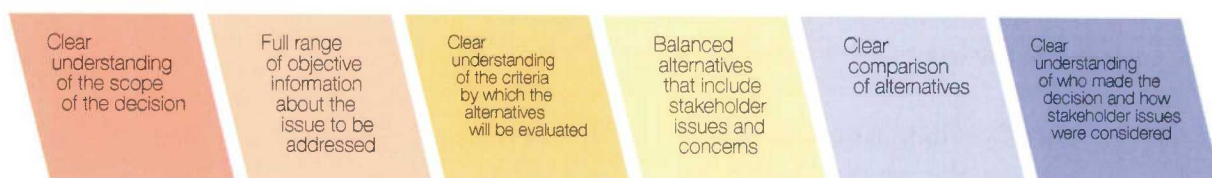
Laws and regulations may prescribe some of your decision processes. You will have more flexibility with others. Regardless, a clear and well-understood process is important.

To illustrate, we use a generic process with typical decision steps to examine when, why, and how to use public participation.

Sample Decision Process



Public Needs





Critical Components and Consideration No. 2: *Develop a Full Understanding of Who Needs to be Involved*

When we speak about the “public” in public participation, we mean any groups and individuals that are affected by or interested in your decision or project. This might include government agencies, businesses, associations, non-profit organizations, interest groups, elected officials, indigenous people, community groups, single individuals and people or groups within your own organization.

Your public participation process should:

- Ask key stakeholders who they think will be interested; do not identify stakeholders in a vacuum
- Identify organized groups and types of individuals who will be interested due to potential or perceived impacts of the decision, process, or project
- Consider any groups that may have special needs
- Identify any groups or individuals that may not fall within your traditional stakeholder categories or parties
- Do NOT neglect the individuals or groups who will be most adamantly opposed to the project, initiative, or decision
- Consider whether other dimensions such as geographic or demographic representation are important

As a decision maker you should also be cautious not to promise any individual stakeholder that he or she will be involved in a specific manner before checking with your public participation experts. Otherwise, such promises can have consequences you may not have considered or intended.

Two Examples

Empty Promises

A decision maker promised a powerful stakeholder that he would be put on the advisory committee; however, it was not clear that an advisory committee was an advisable technique for the project.

Once such a promise is made it is hard to retract, and the promise may drive the public participation process rather than the situation and objectives.

No ‘I’ in Team

A project used a technical advisory team as one aspect of its public participation process. The team focused only on the technical biological aspects of the situation. A decision maker agreed when a non-technical but very vocal person with a single-issue viewpoint pressured the decision maker to add him to the technical advisory team. This angered all the other non-technical stakeholders, and then they also wanted to be included on the technical team. Soon the technical team became large and overloaded with non-technical members and could no longer effectively carry out its tasks.



THE ORBITS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Another way to think of stakeholders is by the extent of their level of interest and perceived distance from the impacts of the decision. Some people will be extremely engaged, attending every meeting and consistently being part of the process. Others will comment occasionally or from afar. Some might know the process is going on, but will not become engaged.

A visual representation of the concept was originally developed by one of IAP2's founders, Lorenz Aggens of INVOLVE in Wilmette, Illinois. Larry's original model has inspired other professionals to continue consideration of how distance from the decision and interest level can affect participation and communication techniques.

This model helps visualize the need for opportunities for the public to be engaged at varying degrees and by different techniques in different steps of the process. Some people might be willing to work collaboratively, but others just want to give input or be informed. People and organisations may move from one orbit to another throughout the life of a project as their interest, awareness, availability and priorities change.



Orbits of Participation

by Lorenz Aggens

The model shows a decision-making centre surrounded by "orbits" of activity; the closer to the centre, the greater the activity and energy. If you are in an orbit closer to the centre, you may have more influence on the decision, but you will need to devote more energy to the process and your participation.

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

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



The Fallacy of the Silent Majority

Many times people in government, businesses, or other organizations, when considering the public and who gets involved, express a sentiment such as “I just wish we’d hear from the silent majority who agree with us and have no trouble with this proposal.” In a sense, this sentiment talks about the Observers and the Unsurprised Apathetics in the Orbits of Participation, as well as those not even in the orbits (i.e., those people who do not know about the initiative). You can NOT assume what these people are thinking, much less that they “agree with you.” Try this experiment:

1. Pick a topic of some controversy and importance that has nothing to do with your work. Pick a topic you have not actively engaged in – you haven’t written a letter to an official, gone to a meeting or hearing, chained yourself to anything related to the topic, etc.
2. Identify the reason you have not become engaged. Is it because:
 - You trust the government/decision makers to make the best decision and you will completely agree with them.
 - You are too busy with other things.
 - You don’t think it will make a difference or that they will listen to you.
 - You don’t know enough to participate.
 - You don’t feel comfortable going to or speaking at meetings.
 - You don’t know how to get involved.
 - You just don’t care what happens.
 - You didn’t know it was going on.
 - Other?

These are some of the reasons stakeholders give. VERY few give the first reason. Did you?





Critical Components and Consideration No. 3: *Define the Appropriate Level of Public Participation*

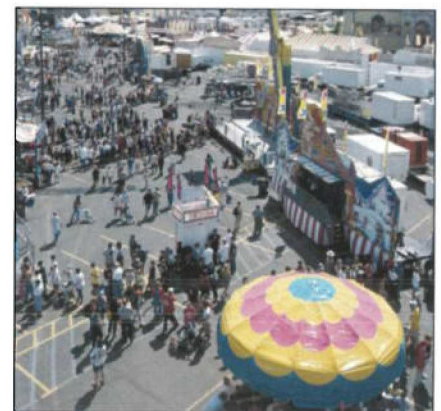
You want to select a level of involvement that best fits both the participants' and project's needs.

You need to define the objectives for involving the public so your public participation process is tailored to the needs, purposes, and intentions of both your organization and the stakeholders. This also helps keep expectations realistic and helps people understand their role and the anticipated level of involvement. Importantly, this decision involves making a promise, which you, as the decision maker, must honor.

Look at your decision-making process. At each step and decision point, what will be the role of the public and the purpose of your public participation effort? How will you use public input or involvement? What value and information can the public bring to the decision? Who will make the decision and how? In other words, embed the public participation process within the decision-making process right from the project's start.


IAP2's Spectrum lists five umbrella objectives for public participation. Each objective represents a different level of public involvement and impact on the decision.

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





IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.



The Spectrum illustrates the following four important points:

1. There is a range of how much impact stakeholders may have in any process or step in a process. This range reflects different levels of involvement. Realize that you may have different levels of involvement and goals at different stages of your decision-making process or with different segments of the stakeholders. The Orbits of Participation illustrate how different groups will want and expect different levels of involvement, reflecting their interest, stake, and commitment.
2. The Spectrum level you pick for involving the public will define and drive your process. Each level of involvement reflects a different public participation goal.
3. Each goal and spectrum level carries a promise YOU are making to the stakeholders. Be sure you can honor that promise before you commit to it. As the decision maker, you are the keeper of this promise. Be clear about what roles the public will play in the decision making and who makes the decision.
4. The goal will drive the actual process and techniques you use to involve the public. Different tools and techniques are better, and worse, at different things. To help pick and design appropriate public participation tools and techniques, your public participation plan will want to add more details and specific objectives to the general goals. Some examples of more specific objectives for public participation are:
 - Clarify the problem, issue or need
 - Gather specific, defined types of information or data to help frame the initiative
 - Understand the range of needs and concerns about a proposal or situation
 - Identify all the alternatives to solving a problem
 - Get feedback on a particular draft or proposal or specific element of the project
 - List and analyze the full range of impacts of any given solution to a problem
 - Have the public design or help design a solution to a problem or situation
 - Manage conflicts around a particular issue
 - Understand and set priorities for resources or future work
 - Involve the community with an initiative from beginning through implementation
 - Recruit volunteers to implement a plan



Factors to Consider when Selecting a Level of Public Participation

How controversial is the project now or how controversial is it likely to be? How likely is it that the media will want to cover it? How polarized are the stakeholders? Generally, more controversial projects call for higher levels of impact on the decision by the public and a level further right on the IAP2 Spectrum. This is also true when there are conflicting or even polarized interests. Projects for which there is little concern or likelihood of impact usually need a lower level of public participation.

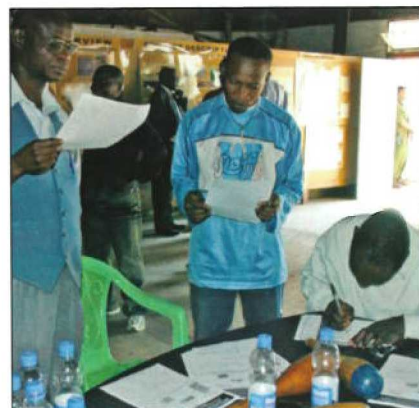


1. **How much trust or distrust is there? Is your agency, business, organization well trusted by the public or not? Has there been an incident in the community recently that has elevated distrust?** Generally, the greater the distrust, the more open your process needs to be and the more influence on the decision you should give the public. Consider moving a bit to the right on the IAP2 Spectrum.

2. **How much is the project likely to affect members of the public, interest groups, or organizations?** The more they will be impacted, the more say people will want in the decision.

3. **How likely is it that the public will be able to influence the decision? How flexible can you even be in considering their input?** Don't make promises you cannot keep. If the decision will be determined mostly by factors out of your control, over which the public has little influence, then there is no point in encouraging an intensive level of participation. Do not waste the public's time.

For example, some decisions and decision processes are dictated largely by existing laws. If a law or regulation only allows consideration of a small number of factors, factors over which there is little control or concern, you and the public may have little chance to modify a decision.



4. **How complex and difficult is the project?** The more complex, the more likely that there are public needs and issues that can be addressed and that there are elements over which the public could improve the decisions.



Critical Components and Consideration No. 4: *Embrace the Core Values of Public Participation*

As an international leader in public participation, the International Association for Public Participation developed the “IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation” for use in developing and implementing public participation processes.

These core values were developed over two years with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation that cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries. The purpose of these core values is to help make better decisions that reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

The core values represent standards and best management practices for public participation. Effective public participation processes reflect these core values.

In addition, a professional code of ethics guides the work of public participation practitioners. As a manager, you should understand that the public participation people working on your project will be guided by these ethics. They are guardians of the process and will be working to keep the integrity and the effectiveness of the process. They will not be advocating for a particular point of view.

IAP2 Code of Ethics for Public Participation Practitioners

IAP2's Code of Ethics for Public Participation Practitioners supports and reflects IAP2's Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation. The Core Values define the expectations and aspirations of the public participation process. The Code of Ethics speaks to the actions of practitioners. See Page 24 for more information about the Code of Ethics.

Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.



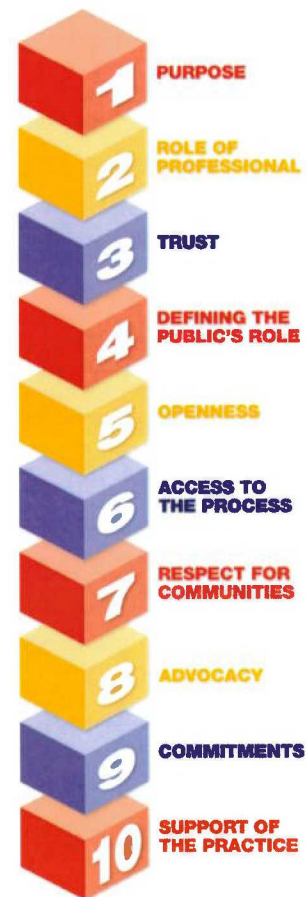
IAP2's Code of Ethics for Public Participation Professionals

As members of IAP2, we recognize the importance of a Code of Ethics, which guides the actions of those who advocate for including all stakeholders in public decision-making processes. To fully discharge our duties as public participation professionals, we define terms used explicitly throughout our Code of Ethics. We define stakeholders as any individual, group of individuals, organisation, or political entity with a stake in the outcome of a decision. We define the public as those stakeholders who are not the decision maker(s). We define public participation as any process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision making and that uses public input to make better decisions.

This Code of Ethics is a set of principles that guides us in our practice of enhancing the integrity of the public participation process. As professionals, we hold ourselves accountable to these principles and strive to hold all participants to the same standards.

1. **Purpose.** We support public participation as a process to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision-making body.
2. **Role of Professional.** We will enhance the public's participation in the decision making process and assist decision makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.
3. **Trust.** We will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the process and among all the participants.
4. **Defining the Public's Role.** We will carefully consider and accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.
5. **Openness.** We will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.
6. **Access to the Process.** We will ensure that stakeholders have fair and equal access to the public participation process and the opportunity to influence decisions.
7. **Respect for Communities.** We will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer."
8. **Advocacy.** We will advocate for the public participation process and will not advocate for a particular interest, party or project outcome.
9. **Commitments.** We will ensure that all those decisions made by the decision maker are made in good faith.
10. **Support of the Practice.** We will mentor new professionals in the field and educate decision makers and the public about the value and use of public participation.

IAP2's Code of Ethics: Building Integrity





Choosing Techniques

As a decision maker, ensure the basic elements listed above are covered before deciding on and announcing a particular technique (e.g., an advisory group or public meeting).

Public participation is more than public hearings, advisory groups, or open houses. A plethora of techniques is available when involving the public. All of the techniques have strengths and weaknesses; all are good for accomplishing some things but not others. Rather than taking a "cookie-cutter" approach, the people designing the public participation plan should be tailoring the plan, picking techniques suitable for:

- Accomplishing the objectives
- Meeting the publics' needs
- Meeting the decision maker's needs
- Fitting within time and resource constraints

Critical Components and Consideration No. 5: Ensure your Public Participation Process Reflects Values and Resources, is Aligned with the Decision Process, and is Driven by the Public Participation Objectives

The process for public participation needs to be designed. A good process:

- Identifies the stakeholders
- Defines the issue or decision
- Is driven by the public participation objectives and appropriate levels of involvement from the IAP2 Spectrum for both the overall process and for each step of the process
- Is aligned with the decision-making process, explicitly describing the role and level of involvement for each step of the process
- Respects the core values of public participation and the needs of the stakeholders
- Reflects the available resources for carrying out the planning process
- Carries the decision maker's promise to participants about the level of impact they will have on the decision
- Includes evaluation of the public participation process and results

A stepped approach can aid in the design of a public participation process. Often managers know they should involve others in their decisions and projects, but they don't know how to do so. A step-by-step process can help one think through the design of an effective public participation process.

IAP2 teaches such a process in the Planning course of its Foundations in Public Participation Program. An outline of that process follows. Regardless of what process is used to design the public participation effort, it should have the key elements bulleted above.



IAP2'S FIVE STEPS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANNING

STEP	ACTION	TASKS
1	Gain Internal Commitment	Activity 1: Identify the decision maker(s) Activity 2: Profile sponsoring organization's approach to public participation Activity 3: Clarify the scope of the decision Activity 4: Identify preliminary stakeholders and issues Activity 5: Assess sponsor's expectations of the IAP2 Spectrum level
2	Learn from the Public	Activity 1: Understand how people perceive the decision Activity 2: Develop a comprehensive list of stakeholders Activity 3: Correlate stakeholders and issues Activity 4: Review/refine the scope of the decision
3	Select the Level of Participation	Activity 1: Assess internal and external expectations Activity 2: Select level on the IAP2 Spectrum Activity 3: Assess "readiness" of sponsoring organization
4	Define the Decision Process and Identify Public Participation and Communication Objectives	Activity 1: Understand the existing decision process Activity 2: Set public participation and communication objectives for each step in the process Activity 3: Compare decision process with public participation and communication objectives Activity 4: Check to confirm objectives meet needs
5	Design the Public Participation and Communications Plan	Activity 1: Determine plan format Activity 2: Integrate baseline data into plan format Activity 3: Identify the public participation techniques Activity 4: Identify support elements for implementation Activity 5: Plan for evaluation



Critical Components and Consideration No. 6:
Evaluate and Adapt – Continuously

Your public participation plan should include evaluation steps both during the process and at its conclusion. Ongoing evaluation allows you to adapt and improve during your process.

Look to the Core Values and to the decision's defined public participation objectives as criteria for the evaluation.

Conducting an evaluation can give you insight into how the public views your organization, your decision process, and your decisions. As a result, you will be better prepared to proceed. Is your organization getting the information it needs to improve the decision? Is the public getting its needs met? Is the public able to affect the process and decision appropriately?

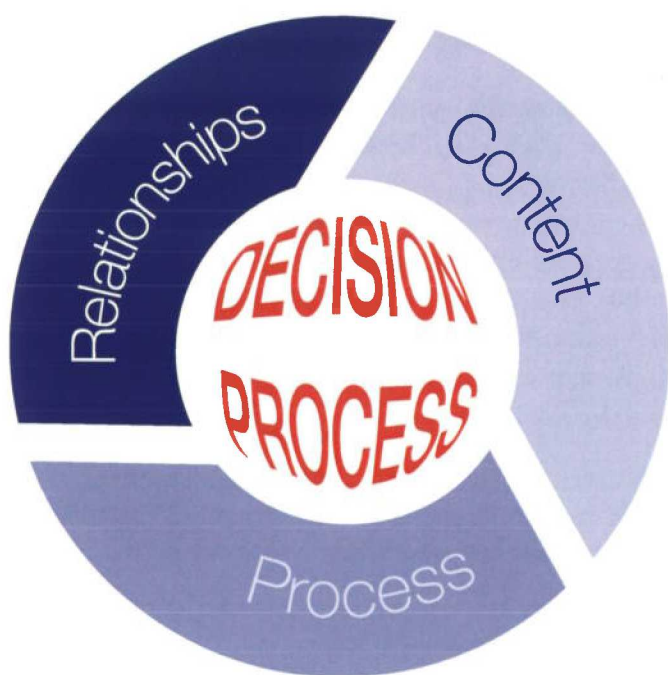




THE DECISION MAKER'S UNIQUE ROLE AND COMMITMENT

Everyone involved in your process has a defined role. As the decision maker, your role is unique. Obviously, you are ultimately responsible for the final decision. But you also hold some responsibilities related to making that decision. These include:

- **Consider the input.** Carefully and thoughtfully consider the public's input when you make your decision. Respect the unique viewpoints and wisdom the public brings to the table. Open yourself up to being swayed by it.
- **Be clear about the process and people's roles.** Be clear about the process you will use to make the decision and how people can participate in that process. Have an open and transparent process.
- **Be clear about givens and non-negotiables.** Be clear on any "bottom lines" and non-negotiable items. Be clear if certain issues are "off the table." Do NOT ask for input if you are not going to consider it.
- **Only promise what you can honor.** Do NOT promise a level of involvement if you cannot commit to that level of involvement and the affiliated level of impact they would have.
- **KEEP your promises.**
- **Honor the Core Values.** Understand and accept the Core Values of Public Participation, which represent the expected standards for the practice.
- **Provide time and resources.** Provide the appropriate level of time and resources to support the process to which you have committed. Be clear about resource limitations when the process is being designed. Set reasonable timelines that are compatible with the scope of the project and the public participation objectives and levels of participation.
- **"The Buck Stops Here."** Be responsible for the integrity of the process. As the decision maker, whether or not you manage the public participation staff or consultants you hold some responsibility for the integrity of the participation process. Thus, you need to understand these key components and the ethics that guide the work of public participation practitioners.



Other Roles and Commitments

Some project teams or programs identify staff or hire consultants to be specifically responsible for public participation for their project(s). Those staff or consultants have even greater obligations. They are uniquely charged with overseeing the process and being sure it reflects the core values and principles. They are ethically bound to advocate for sound public participation practices, including that the public's role in the decision-making process is carefully considered and accurately portrayed. They are the protectors of the promises made to the public about the process.

These public participation practitioners need to ensure the commitments made to the public by the decision maker are genuine and capable of implementation.

Throughout your process, three things need attention: the content related to the decision, the process for getting to the decision, and the relationships among those involved with the decision.

The public participation practitioners and planners involved with your process bring skills for focusing on the relationships and process while the technical staff and other participants concentrate on content.

It is VERY difficult to be responsible for BOTH content and process. Those roles should be separated.



Effective public participation ...

- Has great potential to improve decisions and processes
- Allows the public to bring varied viewpoints and values, unique knowledge, and additional energy to your decisions
- Can increase effectiveness and efficiency

but you must ...

- Make a commitment to it
- Be clear on the scope of the decision and the decision process, on the roles of the public and the IAP2 Spectrum level, and on your public participation objectives
- Provide access to the process for all
- Have a well-designed and thoughtful public process

SUMMARY

Effective public participation holds great potential for improving both your decisions and your decision-making processes. The public brings varied viewpoints, unique knowledge, and additional energy to your efforts and projects. Working with the public can increase your effectiveness, and you can be more cost-effective and efficient by incorporating ideas and concerns from the beginning of the project and decreasing the likelihood of later delays.

However, for effective public participation, you must recognize the need for involving the public and make the commitment to it. You and the public must be clear on the problem or decision at hand. The role of the public, their level of involvement, and the objectives for the participation must drive the process. All the interested and affected parties must be able to participate and have reasonable access to the process. Then, using a well-designed and thought-out plan, integrate the public's role into your decision making.



iap² international association
for public participation

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