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Review Office

Bureau fédéral d'examen  
des évaluations environnementales

**MANUAL ON PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT  
IN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:  
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING  
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMS**

A large, abstract graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, dark, textured shapes that form a large, irregular 'X' or 'V' shape. The shapes have a grainy, stippled texture.

Canada



# PART 2

## DICTIONARY OF TECHNIQUES

**P**art 2 outlines an extensive catalogue of both traditional and less traditional public involvement techniques. The techniques included are listed in Table 2. The directory is organized according to the five areas described earlier:

- Public information/education
- Information feedback
- Consultation
- Extended involvement
- Joint planning

For each technique, the following topics are discussed:

- 1) a brief description;
- 2) advantages and usefulness;
- 3) limitations or problems.

For techniques for which there is not a large body of experience, advantages and disadvantages are not always presented.

**This volume of the manual provides a description of techniques, but does not provide guidance on how to put these various techniques together into a coor-**

**inated program. Guidance on program design is contained in Volume 2 of the manual, which should be read before attempting to design a public involvement program.**

The techniques are presented in the directory in the order shown in Table 2, The approach which the technique most typically falls within is described by an "x". **It must be emphasized, however, that a technique can frequently be employed in a public involvement program based on one of the other approaches.**

The index from the front of this document is replicated here to assist the reader in locating specific methodologies. An alphabetical listing of all techniques can be found in the index.

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VOLUME THREE

DICTIONARY OF  
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT  
TECHNIQUES

PART 2

DICTIONARY  
OF TECHNIQUES

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**Table 2**  
**Public Involvement Techniques**

	Public Information	Information Feedback	Consultation	Extended Involvement	Joint Planning
<b>Public Information</b>					
Advertising	X				
Brochures	X				
Citizen Training Programs	X				
Contests/Events	X				
Direct Mail	X				
Exhibits/Displays	X				
News Conferences	X				
Newsletters	X				
Newspaper Inserts	X				
News Releases	X				
Position Papers	X				
Political Preview	X				
Publications	X				
Publicity	X				
Public Service Announcements	X				
Reports	X				
<b>Public information Feedback</b>					
Analyzing Public Involvement Data		X			
Briefs		X			
Community or Social Profiles		X			
Computer Assisted Participation		X	X		
Content Analysis		X			
Focus Groups		X	X		
Interviews		X	X		
Policy Profiling		X			
Polls		X			
Questionnaires		X			
Surveys		X			
Written Submissions		X			
<b>Consultation</b>					
Brainstorming			X		
Coffee Klatches			X		
Conferences		X	X		
Delphi		X	X		
Dialogues			X		
Field Offices	X	X	X		
Large Meetings			X		
Nominal Group Process		X	X		
Open Houses	X	X	X		

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**Table 2 cont'd**  
**Public Involvement Techniques**

	Public Information	Information Feedback	Consultation	Extended Involvement	Joint Planning
Panels	X	X	X		
Participatory					
Television		X	X		
Phone Lines	X	X	X		
Public Meetings	X	X	X		
Simulation Games		X	X	X	
Technical					
Assistance	X	X	X	X	
Town Meetings		X	X		
Trade-off Games		X	X	X	X
Workshops			X	X	X
<b>Extended Involvement</b>					
Advisory					
Committees			X	X	
Charrettes			X	X	
Task Forces			X	X	
<b>Joint Planning</b>					
Arbitration				X	X
Collaborative					
Problem Solving				X	X
Conciliation				X	X
Mediation				X	X
Negotiation				X	X
Niagara Process				X	X

# PUBLIC INFORMATION TECHNIQUES

## ADVERTISING

**P**ublic involvement programs which are newsworthy are often able to obtain considerable free publicity (See News Conferences, News Releases, Publicity and Public Service Announcements). However there are times when paid advertising is a useful adjunct to the publicity program. Examples of uses of paid advertising include:

- An announcement of a public meeting or other public involvement activity.
- A weekly question and answer column regarding a proposed project.
- An overall description of a project and its impacts.
- A description of agency efforts to solve problems which have been identified as public concerns.
- A clip-out coupon for people wanting more information about a decision making process.
- Advocacy advertising, to clearly communicate the agency's position on an issue. "If you want it said right, say it yourself".  
(Globe and Mail Brochure)

The effectiveness of advertising rests substantially on how well it is prepared. The most important thing is to establish a clear image of the kind of people to be reached. Many people depend solely upon television for their news and information, but often these are not the people who are likely to be active in public involvement programs. The selection of appropriate media is tied to the kind of people that need to be reached. Cablevision is easy to access because of CRTC regulations about community programming; some inexpensive "teaser" advertisements in other media can greatly increase the viewing audience of cable.

One word of caution: in small communities where radio, television and newspapers are all struggling and all competing for the same advertising dollar, there can be ill-feeling if all the advertising goes to one media. If, for example, all the advertising dollars go to the local newspaper, the radio station may feel less cooperative about providing free public service announcements. It is necessary to spread the advertising budget around, to ensure that no one feels offended

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ADVERTISING

and cuts off the free publicity.

A different philosophy prevails in larger cities where the advertising departments and news departments are kept separate. In this circumstance the editorial department is usually not aware of whether or not advertising has been bought, and will not consider this relevant in deciding the newsworthiness of a story. In fact a newspaper person is likely to be offended by the suggestion that free publicity is "owed" because of all the advertising the company buys from the newspaper.

#### **Advantages of Advertising**

The primary advantage of paid advertising is that the agency can communicate its message just the way it wants. With free publicity, the media will provide its own slant and interpretation based on what they think is most newsworthy. This may or may not provide complete information, and may not have the emphasis desired by the agency. With a paid advertisement, the agency is in charge of the material, and the manner in which it is presented.

Advertisements reach a wide range of publics, including people who would otherwise not know about

the program and who would be unlikely to participate in other kinds of public involvement activities.

While advertisements are primarily a way of informing the public, rather than getting information back from it, it is possible to include clip-out coupons or questionnaires as a way of getting public response.

#### **Limitations of Advertisements**

The primary limitation of advertisements is that they may be perceived by the public as an attempt to "buy" goodwill. Everybody knows that advertisements cost money, so the perception can develop that the agency is spending large sums of taxpayers' money in an effort to push its point of view. The expenditure of funds for advertising to push a point of view is particularly offensive from a government agency. Opponents of the agency's proposed actions may seize on the expenditure of advertising money as an issue to use against the agency.

For this reason considerable caution should be exercised in spending large sums of money on advertising. Advertisements announcing upcoming meetings are likely to be appreciated, rather than criticized. But



frequent full page or prime time advertisements are likely to be criticized, although this depends on their tone and content, and the overall context. If the tone is "hard sell", then criticism is almost guaranteed. But if the tone is objective and factual, recognizing some of the problems that may be associated with the agency's proposed actions, then people will be slower to criticize.

## **BROCHURES**

**B**rochures are usually a brief summary of the study or proposed action(s), the issues involved, and the opportunities for public involvement. Typically, the purpose in issuing a brochure is to reach additional publics or inform known publics of the public involvement program, or a new phase of a study or decision making process.

The usefulness of a brochure depends on its ability to attract interest; therefore, visual appeal and the way in which it is written are extremely important. However, it is equally essential that a brochure be written objectively and not attempt to "sell" the agency position.

If the brochure is printed on light cardstock, it may include a detachable reply-paid postcard addressed to

the project soliciting comments, questions and suggestions. Remember, you pay only for the cards returned; you need a permit number for Canada Post. Often some 85 percent of the respondents will add their names, addresses and other identifying information if asked. You can then sort the replies by geographic area, occupation etc.

### **Advantages of Brochures**

Brochures are a direct means of providing a large amount of information to many people in a relatively economical manner. They save staff time which would be involved in repeating the same information to a number of people. Brochures also document agency efforts to obtain public involvement.

### **Limitations of Brochures**

Preparation and approval of a brochure can be time-consuming (although less time-consuming than repeating the same information to a number of people).

## **CITIZEN TRAINING PROGRAMS**

**T**raining programs for citizens may be conducted to provide them with enough technical background so that they can participate more effectively,

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**BROCHURES**

**CITIZEN TRAINING  
PROGRAMS**

and will feel more equal in relationship to agency staff. They may also be conducted to help citizens work together more effectively. Finally, they may be conducted to teach citizens about a topic (such as conservation techniques) in order that they can subsequently train others.

#### **Examples of Citizen Training Programs :**

-A citizen advisory group received extensive training in utility operations in order to make recommendations on electric rate policies and standards.

-An advisory group received training in communication skills and meeting leadership in order to work together more effectively.

- Citizens were invited to attend all-day training sessions on energy conservation as part of an effort to come up with a community energy conservation plan.

- Citizen group leaders were taught facilitation skills to lead small groups during public meetings.

Training can be accomplished formally through seminars, workshops, or lectures or it can be conducted informally through simulation games, round-table discussions, "brown

bag" lunches, publications or audiovisual materials.

#### **Advantages of Citizen Training Programs**

Training can increase the effectiveness and impact of public contributions to the decision making process. Also, after receiving training, citizens may feel less intimidated by technical staff and other agency officials. The result can be that they react less defensively, are able to make suggestions in a manner which is more understandable to technical people, and express their concerns more openly.

When properly trained, citizens may also work together more effectively, and can assist in conducting the public involvement program.

#### **Disadvantages of Citizen Training Programs**

Some citizens may resent the suggestion that they need training or may question the agency's intent to conduct an objective training program.

Training usually must be limited to a small group. This presents no problem if the training is being given to an established advisory group. But if the training is being offered to the general public it raises the problem of selecting participants.

## CONTESTS/EVENTS

**O**ne way to stimulate interest in a topic or gain publicity is to stage a contest or other event. Usually the contest or event is clearly related to the topic of the public involvement program.

### Examples of contests or events include:

-An essay or poster contest for school children on environment related topics.

-A fair for displaying energy conservation ideas and devices.

-An award for excellence in community planning.

In many cases these awards or events will be newsworthy locally, and will catch the attention of the local media for the entire public involvement program. Media attention, in turn, can help increase participation in other public involvement activities. In fact, a contest or other event is best planned to provide publicity for subsequent workshops, public meetings, or advisory group participation. This way the public is not disappointed by having its interest aroused, but finding no way to express this interest.

## Advantages of Contests/Events

Contests or events can gain publicity for the entire public involvement program, and can also help to draw out those people interested in a particular topic or issue.

## Limitations of Contests/Events

Participation in the contest or event may not generate public comment that is directly applicable to the decision making process at hand.

Unless the contests or events lead directly into other public involvement activities, they arouse interest and create expectations for continuing participation which can lead to resentment if no further opportunities for participation are provided.

## DIRECT MAIL

**D**irect mail is one way of informing every household in a geographic area about a project or program. Through the postal service, flyers and newsletters can be delivered to areas as small as a single letter carrier route at a third class bulk rate.

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CONTESTS/  
EVENTS

DIRECT MAIL

### Advantages

Direct mail ensures that every single household in an area is informed about the project, and so is useful to those situations where complete coverage is desired.

### Limitations

Direct mail can be costly, especially for projects where a large number of households must be informed but the percentage interested in the issue is likely to be small. Flyers and newsletters can easily be lost with other "junk mail", so they need to be well designed for public appeal.

### EXHIBITS/DISPLAYS

One technique that has been frequently used to inform the general public of a public involvement program or to obtain comment from the public is to set up exhibits or displays in such places as shopping centers.

Exhibits may be particularly useful in reaching publics that had not previously been interested in the issue, so were unlikely to participate in public involvement activities. Exhibits and displays also serve an educational purpose even when people choose not to participate. Exhibits should be coordinated with other public involvement activities so

that people who indicate an interest as a result of seeing an exhibit can be informed of other ways they can participate.

The nature of the exhibit is particularly important. A fixed exhibit, which provides general information but does not require staff presence, usually generates less interest than a staffed booth at which some activity is taking place. This is particularly true in situations where there are numerous other exhibits or booths. Some of the things which have been done to spark additional interest include:

- Comments from people who visited the booth were videotaped and played to passersby, who were also invited to make comments.

- Comments from the public were recorded on flip charts and displayed where everybody could read them.

- Response forms were provided so that passersby could write comments regarding issues addressed in the display.

### Advantages of Exhibits/ Displays

Exhibits/displays provide information to the general public about issues important to the agency. They also reach people who do

not ordinarily participate in public involvement programs, and may get them interested in future participation.

### **Disadvantages of Exhibits/Displays**

A staffed booth requires a major commitment of staff time.

An exhibit that is not coordinated with other public involvement activities may arouse interest without providing any method for follow-up.

### **NEWS CONFERENCES**

**W**henever there is a major story to make available to the media – such as announcement of a controversial decision – a news conference is one way to get additional interest and involvement from the media for the story.

The normal news conference consists of a brief statement by an agency official followed by questions from the media. The statement will usually be videotaped for television coverage, as will be some of the questions and answers. Both the spokesperson's statement, as well as general background on the issue, should be printed and distributed to the media. This will assist

the media and protect against misquotes.

News conferences are only effective when there is a major story. A reporter is under tight time pressure, and it takes time to get to the news conference, set up (if television), record the event, and get back to his or her office. In the same time several other stories could be produced. What the news conference does offer, if the story is newsworthy, is actual quotes or footage of the announcement, plus an opportunity to ask questions.

When holding a news conference to announce a story which could affect a local community or neighborhood, it is advisable to consult with local community leaders in advance in order to identify any sensitivities and avoid offending local officials by taking them by surprise.

### **Advantages of News Conferences**

News conferences can increase the amount of coverage given to a story.

News conferences usually result in a number of direct quotes, permitting the agency to tell its story directly, rather than as interpreted by the reporter.

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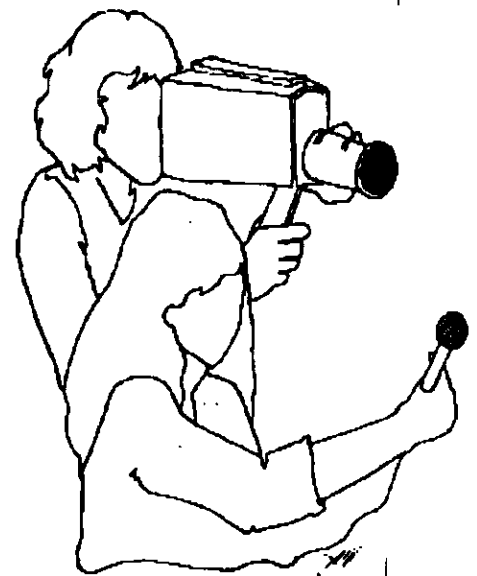
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## **Public Information Techniques**

**EXHIBITS/  
DISPLAYS**

**NEWS  
CONFERENCES**



### Limitations of News Conferences

News conferences are only effective when a story is extremely newsworthy, or a "name" figure is involved. Use of news conferences without a newsworthy story will result in a loss of credibility with the media.

News conferences require careful advance planning and coordination to ensure that all statements are prepared in the proper written form, the media is adequately notified.

If an issue is a sensitive one, the news conference can provide an opportunity for negativism to feed on itself and encourage the reporters to outdo each other in their critical and suspicious questions. The tenor of most of the resulting articles is likely to reflect the most negative reporter present. When the proponent tries to make sense to one party, he or she is likely to offend those with different points of view.

If this scenario is a possibility, a more effective approach will be issuing a news release, followed by a telephone discussion with individual reporters and a face to face interview if necessary. (See News Releases)

### NEWSLETTERS

Periodic newsletters are a means of sustaining public interest in a study or proposed action, as well as documenting the progress of the decision making process.

A major purpose of a newsletter is to inform the public. But newsletters also serve the function of maintaining the visibility of the decision making process, particularly during stages when technical studies are under way and there is little opportunity for public involvement.

The value of the newsletter rests entirely upon its ability to stir up public interest and encourage involvement. A drab newsletter riddled with bureaucratic or technical jargon will elicit little enthusiasm, despite the effort you put into it. It is important that newsletters distributed to the public also be distributed internally, so that staff are at least as informed as the public.

Newsletters can have response forms printed in them, such as tear off coupons or reply cards. This assists in making the flow of information two way.

## Advantages of Newsletters

Newsletters can be an important tool for keeping the public informed of the results of studies and the progress of the decision making process. They can be particularly helpful in maintaining interest during periods when technical studies are on-going and and there are few opportunities for public involvement.

## Limitations of Newsletters

Preparation of newsletters can be time-consuming and printing and mailing costs can be expensive.

## NEWSPAPER INSERTS

One technique which has been used to provide information to the general public, and at the same time solicit public comment, is an insert distributed through the local newspaper. This describes the study or decision making process and the various means by which the public can participate, and includes a response form on which readers can express their opinions or indicate a willingness to be involved in other activities. Most newspapers are able to handle the distribution of inserts for a modest cost per copy, since this is a frequent advertis-

ing technique, and they can often print the insert at considerably less cost than commercial printers. However, because of the numbers of copies involved, the total costs of the insert can be high.

Most urban newspapers are able to distribute inserts to selected geographic areas, rather than their entire readership, so that it is possible to target the insert at those readers who will have the greatest interest in the study or proposed action.

The percentage of returned response forms is not likely to be very high, yet in terms of total quantity the insert may provide a means of participation for a very large number of citizens, compared with other public involvement techniques. Because people who complete the response form are self-selecting, a statistical bias is introduced into the responses, so the results cannot be considered statistically valid.

## Advantages of Newspaper Inserts

Newspaper inserts reach a much greater percentage of the population than other public involvement techniques.

Newspaper inserts provide an additional means for

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## Public Information Techniques

NEWSLETTERS

NEWSPAPER  
INSERTS

identifying individuals and groups interested in participating in public involvement activities.

### Limitations of Newspaper Inserts

The total cost of an insert can be high because of the large number of copies printed and inserted.

The response rate of people mailing back a response form is low, and cannot be represented as statistically valid.

### NEWS RELEASES

A major technique for obtaining publicity is issuing news releases. News releases are short (usually 1-3 pages) announcements of information which – hopefully – will be covered by the media. Often the news release is accompanied by more detailed background information. In some cases, the media will use material word for word from the news release; in others, the news release will simply provide background for a larger story. Frequently media people will respond to a news release by calling for additional information before writing their story.

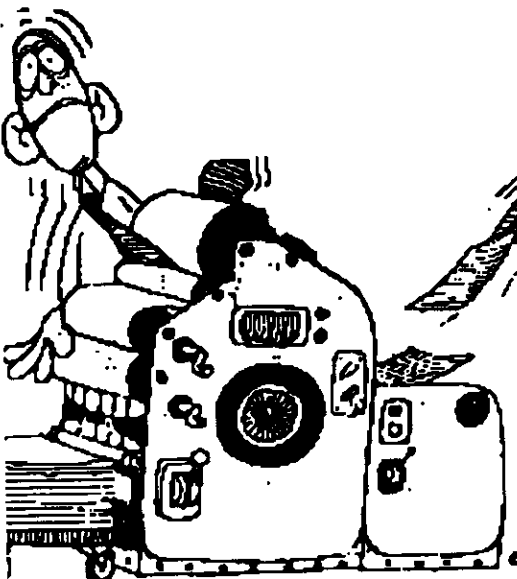
The key to whether or not the information from a news release is picked up by the

media is “newsworthiness”. If the media think the story will interest their readers or viewers, then they will give it attention. This requires that the person writing the story identify the “slant” on the story which makes it newsworthy, and write the news release accordingly. It may also require telephone follow-up to be sure a story is run.

News releases are normally prepared and issued by a Media Relations Office, or by an area or district office, but there are a few general principles that are worth knowing in case it is ever necessary to write a news release:

News releases are written so that all the most important information is in the first paragraph, the next most important information in the second paragraph, and so forth. The reasons for this are:

- 1) the first paragraph must capture the interest of the editor or producer, or he or she may read no further and there will be no coverage; and
- 2) when a story is squeezed into a limited time slot or small space the story will be cut from the bottom up, so that any important information in the bottom paragraphs will be cut.





Other general guidelines for news releases – or any other materials for the media – include:

- 1) Keep sentences short.
- 2) Use simple language instead of complex.
- 3) Use the active voice.
- 4) Add quotes or conversation to the story.
- 5) Avoid wordiness.
- 6) Write as if it were a conversation.
- 7) Relate the story to the reader's experience.
- 8) Do not overuse adjectives, ("dynamic", "outstanding", etc.)
- 9) Use a consistent style.
- 10) Be honest and strive for accuracy.

A news release can be followed by a telephone call to individual reporters and a face to face interview if necessary. When you meet one-on-one, you can bring out the questions and issues relevant for each particular print or electronic medium.

This approach is consistent with endeavouring to develop a close and continuing relationship with key reporters during the life of a project or program. By making this investment of time and energy, you are much more likely to respond to the reporters' constraints of time and space and thus obtain more effective news coverage.

### **Advantages of News Releases**

News releases are an effective way of obtaining publicity for a story, and often stimulate the interest of the media to stories which go in greater depth than the news release itself.

### **Limitations of News Releases**

The media will not provide coverage for news releases on topics they do not consider newsworthy.

### **POLITICAL PREVIEWS**

**A**t the beginning of any public involvement program, it is a good idea to inform those elected representatives whose constituents might be affected by a project. A briefing session, either with all representatives present, or individual briefings are both possibilities, depending on the particular situation. A briefing session should be preceded by the preparation of a briefing paper or other documentation as required. Such a briefing session(s) can be held prior to any official announcements or press conference of the project or the public involvement's program's start-up. In this manner, elected representatives will be fully informed should they receive queries from constituents.

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## **Public Information Techniques**

**NEWS  
RELEASES**

**POLITICAL  
PREVIEWS**

Documentation should include any reports which will be distributed during the subsequent program, plus a copy of the public involvement plan itself.

### POSITION PAPERS

**P**osition papers are brief publications outlining a way of dealing with a particular issue. They are a proposal, inviting reaction and comment. Position papers may give management alternatives to test public response, and may seek new ideas or options from the readers.

Position papers are used to test new policies, planning approaches, solutions to problems, recommendations from working groups, or other proposals that may have an impact on the public. They can also be used by public working groups to test ideas with other people, before the group's recommendations are finalized.

The position paper should:

- state clearly the source of the paper, the tentative nature of the proposal it contains, and how feedback will be used;
- be prepared so readers can write in the margins;
- specify to whom comments are to be written, preferably on a pre-addressed detachable insert;

- give enough time for responses (if aimed at the general public, give at least two months to allow for regular meetings or organized groups to take place; do not count the summer holiday period as part of your response time period); and

- identify a contact person for questions which may need interpretation.

Publish a revised paper which uses the responses received and shows how the final version will be used. Make sure this paper is mailed to those who have responded.

### PUBLICATIONS

**I**n most public information and participation programs, the primary means of providing people with basic information is print. Whether in the form of a brochure sent by householder mail, a display advertisement or tabloid insert in a newspaper, or a report or booklet of some kind, print is typically the cheapest means of distributing information.

Unlike the electronic media, print messages are relatively long lasting. In contrast to the demands of public meetings, print reaches its readers in the comfort and security of their own homes, enabling its message to be

absorbed with a minimum of anxiety and at the recipient's convenience.

When communicating large quantities of information, some sort of publication is about the only mechanism of communication. The media are useful for communicating summaries of information, but not for detailed and complex information.

Publications must be written with great objectivity and a concern that all points of view are accurately represented. This differs from public relations documents which are designed to "sell" a particular position by presenting it in the best possible light. However, the attractiveness of a publication, and readability, are essential to obtain interest. To be credible, a publication should acknowledge that the agency is aware of the public's concern about the project.

A simple, clear, direct style of writing is important, even in technical publications. For information to be delivered through newspaper inserts or direct householder mail, the "Fog Index" (the percentage of words with 3 or more syllables) should be consistent with the material usually read by the public in the program area. For example, a rural weekly may have a Fog Index of 6, an

urban newsmagazine 10 and a planning report 20. Ensure that the character of the material is informative rather than persuasive.

#### **Advantages of Publications**

Publications are about the only means of communicating detailed and complex information to the public.

Publications permit the story to be told in what the agency believes to be an "objective" manner, rather than with the slant provided by the news media to increase newsworthiness.

#### **Limitations of Publications**

Publications are usually designed to reach a limited audience, particularly if they are lengthy.

Considerable staff effort and cost goes into the preparation of publications.

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## **Public Information Techniques**

POSITION  
PAPERS

PUBLICATIONS

## PUBLICITY

**N**ewspaper, radio, and television are all major communication vehicles for reaching the broad general public. Since the cost of paid advertising would be astronomical if used every time information must be provided to the public, a well-designed program to obtain free publicity can be an essential element in any public involvement program.

There are several different kinds of publicity that can be obtained through the media, depending on the newsworthiness of the issue:

**Community calendars.** Most media offer occasional community calendars containing brief announcements of meetings or events.

**Public service announcements.** While most radio and television stations will broadcast some public service announcements, they do not have to run the announcements of any one organization, and are usually in the position of picking and choosing among the announcements sent them by a number of organizations. Public service announcements may be sent to radio stations either in the form of a written script or a cassette recording. Since television is a visual medium, public

service announcements for television may be accompanied by slides, or by videotape. Videotapes must be up to industry standards, and will not be the same size used in most personal or corporate videotape systems.

**News conferences.** A news conference is an event at which members of the media are invited to be present when a major announcement is made, or an opportunity is provided to ask questions of a "name" figure. Normally news conferences include both a formal statement and a question and answer period. News conferences can lead to increased media interest, but are only effective if the story is very newsworthy.

**Media coverage.** The media will often send reporters to cover the events at a public meeting or other activity. Often these stories are the general public's only source of information about what occurred.

**Feature Stories.** If a story is very newsworthy the media may also be willing to do a feature story. Feature stories are usually in depth stories designed to provide background, rather than just coverage of immediate events. Because they are not tied to specific events, it may take several weeks of coor-

dination before a story actually appears.

**Call-in/Talk Shows.** Many radio and television stations offer call-in or talk shows at which notables, or people involved in newsworthy issues, appear as guests. Often listeners are able to phone in and ask guests about their experiences or the topic being discussed.

While it is perfectly reasonable to make every effort to obtain free publicity and present the story as effectively as possible, keep in mind that the media are in the news business, not the publicity business. Unless media people are persuaded that the story is newsworthy, it will receive minimal coverage.

Media relations staff often have established contacts within the media, and will have ideas about which media or reporter will be interested in which kind of story, and how to present a story to attract their interest.

The most important thing to remember in all media relations is to maintain credibility. There are definitely times when the media can be extremely helpful but only if they can rely on the agency for accurate and complete information. If reporters feel that they are being manipulated, this will

usually translate into negative stories, and an inability to utilize the full publicity potential of the media.

### Advantages of Publicity

Publicity obtained through the media is often the only cost effective way of reaching the general public.

Information appearing in the media often has higher credibility than publications prepared by the agency, since critics are likely to see agency publications as self-serving.

### Limitations of Publicity

If the media do not see a program as newsworthy, it will be difficult to obtain publicity. The media are in the news business, not the publicity business.

Credibility must be maintained with the media, even if it means releasing potentially embarrassing information. Whenever the press feels manipulated, stories will become more negative, and it will be harder to get coverage.

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PUBLICITY



## **PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**A**ll radio and television stations are required to provide public service news coverage and programming as a condition of keeping their license. If a public involvement program is newsworthy, it should be relatively easy to obtain free publicity announcing a next meeting or inviting public involvement by sending Public Service Announcements to local radio and television stations.

Public Service Announcements sent to radio stations are usually in the form of prepared scripts of varying lengths from 10 seconds to a maximum of 60 seconds. As an alternative, many stations will accept prerecorded announcements on a cassette. The use of humor or other attention-attracting devices increases the likelihood that the material will be used. Since the announcer will "speak" the story, sentences must be brief and simple, so that they sound conversational.

Because television is a visual media, television stations prefer that the script be accompanied by slides or pre-recorded on video. Both the slides and video must be up to television industry production standards.

Although radio and television stations must provide free public service time, they have no obligation to provide publicity for any particular program. The requests for time they receive usually exceed the available public service time. As a result it is best to assume that the amount of coverage will depend upon the extent to which the story is newsworthy, rather than because of any obligation of the radio or TV station.

### **Advantages of Public Service Announcements**

Public service announcements provide a way of obtaining free publicity through the media for public involvement activities.

### **Limitations of Public Service Announcements**

Radio and television stations are under no obligation to run a particular public service announcement, so some stations will run the announcement, and some will not.

Public service announcements must be very brief, so the amount of information which can be communicated is limited.

## REPORTS

Throughout the course of a public involvement program it is often necessary to issue one or more reports summarizing the current findings of studies or detailed information about the issue or proposed action being considered. Reports are most likely to be needed:

- 1) when issues or problems have been thoroughly identified or described;
- 2) after conceptual alternatives have been developed, and
- 3) when the impacts of the alternatives have been identified.

Many technical reports, and even some supposedly "public" documents such as hearing reports, are often very difficult for the public to read. An executive summary in layman's language should always be prepared; depending on the complexity of the report, the summary may be sufficient for the majority of citizens, with the more detailed reports sent only to those who are sufficiently interested or have the technical training to digest the full report. It is also advisable to make copies of the full report available at the project office and on the reserve shelf of the local library. In this way other interested profes-

sionals can access the technical information easily.

The extent to which reports are read depends largely on the readability and visual attractiveness. However, reports issued as part of public involvement programs should not be "slick" or look expensive. This can give the impression that the agency is trying to "buy" the public's favor, and may imply that decisions have already been reached (why else would someone be willing to spend so much for graphics, etc.), when they really have not.

One effective way to protect against negative public reaction to reports is to ask an existing citizens' advisory group to review the report before it is issued to the public. This usually results in early detection of any problem areas, before the report has been widely distributed.

### Advantages of Reports

Reports are often the only effective way of communicating detailed technical or complex information. Printed reports are comparatively low in cost compared with any other way of communicating the same information.

Reports also provide a visible record of the public in-

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REPORTS

ible record of the public involvement process, so that it is always clear what information has been communicated to the public.

### **Limitations of Reports**

The public will read reports only if they are easy to understand and visually attractive. Reports that are written in industry jargon or technical lingo will normally be read only by other techni-

cal experts. Preparation of readable and attractive reports will take time and talent for explaining complex material simply, without appearing patronizing.

In many cases it is necessary to develop report summaries for distribution to the general public, with the full reports sent only to technical experts or organized groups.



# PUBLIC INFORMATION FEEDBACK

## ANALYZING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT DATA

**S**ee Content Analysis.

## BRIEFS

**A** request for written briefs is a formal method of seeking the views of organized public interest groups, industries, and local government. Briefs give a sense of judicial process and require strict adherence to form. Written briefs range from simple letters to fully researched papers.

Written briefs are needed when there are many organized groups who need a chance to put their case directly before the agency. Because this method allows for carefully considered positions to be researched and developed, it is useful for supplementing less formal public involvement methods. Written briefs give a concrete record of public comment, and therefore are valuable when policy is being developed.

If written briefs are required, the following rules apply:

-a clear statement of the subject of the briefs must be

published;

-enough time must be allowed for people to do the research and writing;

-the agency must make all necessary information available to the brief writers;

-receipt of briefs should be acknowledged in writing;

-a summary of the main points of each brief should be compiled, to aid cataloguing and assessment of concerns, advice or proposals;

-all briefs submitted should be available at a viewing centre; and

-a formal paper in response to the briefs must be published, to show how the briefs have been used.

## COMMUNITY OR SOCIAL PROFILES

**C**he community or social profile is a comprehensive summary of the key characteristics of the people of a community or study area. Its purpose is to orient planners, engineers and administrators to the social and cultural realities which they need to understand and take into account if a project, program or policy is to be accepted. It can assist the decision maker in assessing how a community is likely to respond to a new

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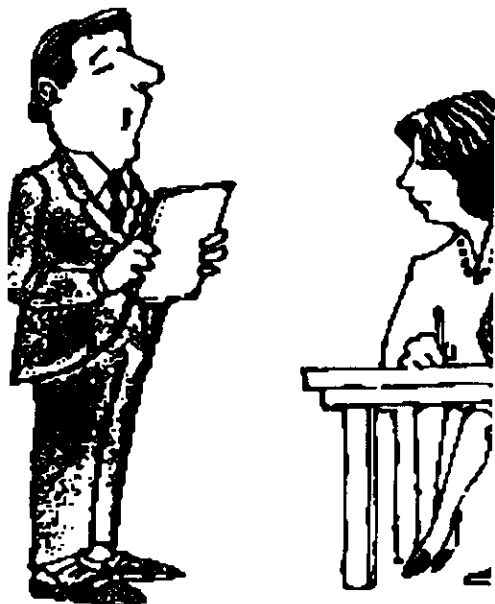
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project or program. Community profiles are discussed at greater length in Chapter 1.

### COMPUTER BASED PARTICIPATION

In recent years there has been considerable interest in using computers as the basis for new forms of public involvement. The basic approaches identified to date include: conferencing, interactive polling, simulation, or interactive computer graphics.

**Computer Based Teleconferencing:** The techniques of computer conferencing have been developed primarily to link participants who are geographically dispersed so that they can communicate by sending and receiving messages on remote terminal keyboards. Information, including graphics, can be made available to all participants in the same form simultaneously, and it is also possible for the agency to respond to questions asked by the public about that information. Computer conferencing could allow task forces or advisory groups meeting in separate communities to conduct a meeting which allowed for dialogue, sharing of information, and responses from the various communities.

**Interactive Polling:** Equipment and software programs have been developed which allow participants in a meeting to indicate their responses to statements, alternatives, or proposals by voting on a hand-held computer console. The computer collects and stores the votes, and a summary is shown on a large electronic display at the front of the room. A skilled moderator can work with the group to identify areas of consensus or disagreement and areas in which additional discussion is needed.

**Computer Based Simulation:** Simulation games are designed to take people through a series of choices and provide them with feedback on the consequences of their choices in meeting defined objectives. Uses of simulation games have been as varied as modeling the diplomacy leading to nuclear war, evaluating the impact of a series of choices on a natural resource base, or assessing the social consequences of alternative policy decisions.

**Computer Based Interactive Graphics:** A number of systems are currently being designed in which the computer displays a range of alternatives, then re-displays the alternatives or impacts in response to questions or changed group priorities.

This technique will allow a group to watch a computer display while discussing the issues and, in effect, ask the computer to display different alternatives based on different sets of assumptions or priorities.

### **Advantages of Computer Based Participation**

Computer based techniques will permit participation of geographically dispersed people, so long as they have access to the appropriate computer consoles and telephone network. In the future, technical information about a proposed agency action could be stored in the computer and called up by a citizen at any time. Programs could even be developed that would permit citizens to raise questions and request clarification of the information.

Interaction polling permits people to be involved while offering anonymity when desired. Through the use of two-way cable television the same approach could be used to get community-wide decision making.

Interactive graphics and simulation games are both designed to help people visualize the implications of various priorities and assumptions, and may encourage the development of a consensus.

### **Limitations of Computer Based Participation**

The availability of computers still has not reached the point that the techniques described above are useful except in specialized circumstances.

These techniques assume that participants supply their own computers. Since computers are expensive, use of these techniques may either exclude people who do not have computers, or require the agency to provide access to computers.

Many people still feel intimidated by computers. People may also resent having to participate in a preset format dictated by the computer.

Fascination with technical equipment can sometimes gloss over continuing political conflict, giving an unrealistic impression of the political realities of a situation.

Technical problems with the computers can occur at times which prove embarrassing and frustrating.

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## CONTENT ANALYSIS \*

**C**ontent analysis is a research tool used in sociology, journalism and political science to analyze the actual content of newspaper articles, letters, briefs, and submissions. Content analysis can be used to analyze the comments an agency receives during a public involvement program. The technique is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1 of this volume.

## FOCUS GROUPS

**F**ocus groups are a market research technique which was developed as an alternative to expensive survey research techniques. A manufacturer introducing a new car might want to know people's reactions to the car in order to target an advertising program. Rather than surveys, which might cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, the manufacturer might use focus groups to get a "quick-and-dirty" assessment of public reaction.

Focus groups are open ended discussions among 8-10 individuals about a particular product or choice. It is customary to seek specific diversity of background and viewpoints among the participants so they represent important elements or publics. The discussion group is led by a moderator who is

skilled in drawing out the comments and reactions which will have significance. Several focus groups will be convened, until the moderator can anticipate the comments that will be made. Usually this requires 3-4 groups. The moderator then prepares a report summarizing what was said, and draws inferences for marketing of the product or idea.

The concept of focus groups can be applied to most situation where public reaction is sought. A series of focus groups might be used to anticipate community reaction to a proposed project or proposal. The information drawn from the focus groups would help "tailor" the proposal, anticipate and respond to probable concerns, or convince the agency that public reaction would be so negative as to make the proposal unwise.

While focus groups do not provide a statistically valid analysis of public reaction to an idea or product, they do offer an inexpensive way to get a "feel" for what the general public reaction will be.

### Advantages of Focus Groups

Focus groups provide a quick way to determine what public reaction is likely

to be to a proposal or project.

Focus groups are inexpensive compared to other market research and polling techniques.

Focus groups provide an impression of general public reaction, instead of just the reactions of organized groups and interests.

### Limitations of Focus Groups

Focus groups do not have strong statistical validity, and could be misleading if there are major sampling errors.

The moderator of focus groups must be skilled at drawing out significant comments. This may require hiring an outside consultant experienced at running focus groups.

Focus groups help predict reactions, but do not substitute for discussions with the critical interest groups.

### INTERVIEWS \*

Interviews can be informal, loosely structured discussions, or they can be part of a poll or survey in which the interviewer asks only carefully worded pre-tested questions.

Interviews can be an effective

part of a public involvement program. A series of 30 to 60-minute interviews with representatives of all the key interests can provide a quick understanding of the issues, the dynamics between the interests, and the intensity of their interest in the issue. Several days of interviews can often produce an extremely large amount of information about an issue.

For further information on interviews refer to Chapter 1 in this volume.

### POLICY PROFILING

Policy profiling is a technique for assessing the impact of various individuals, groups and organizations on governmental agency decisions. The purpose of policy profiling is to provide a systematic framework and checklist which decision makers can use to make sure they carry out the kind of analysis required to assess the consequences of a decision. Policy profiling also aids decision makers in organizing their staffs and making use of other knowledgeable observers.

The basic assumptions behind policy profiling are that in order to assess the impact of relevant individuals, groups and organizations on any possible decision or course of action, it is neces-

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sary to do the following:

□ Identify the individuals, groups and organizations (the "actors") that are likely to have a direct or indirect impact on the course of action. This means including those who have a formal role in the making or blocking of the decision; it also means including those who have an indirect impact, such as those who will make it either easier or harder to carry out a decision after it is made.

□ Determine whether each actor supports, opposes, or is neutral toward the decision.

□ Determine how powerful each actor is in blocking the decision, helping make it happen, or effecting the implementation of a decision.

Policy profiling has several valuable uses:

-focussing different perceptions of the political situation

-forecasting outcomes  
monitoring changes in position

-identifying the potential for consensus

The actual technique employed in policy profiling requires more detail to explain than is appropriate here.

## POLLS ✱

**P**olls are a technique for measuring the mix of opinions held by the public. Polls are conducted by trained interviewers who ask each person interviewed exactly the same questions, and in the same order. Polling can be conducted over the telephone or in person.

These questions are pre-tested to be sure they are clear, unbiased, and elicit the information desired. The people interviewed will be part of a sample population chosen using rules accepted by professionals in the field as guaranteeing the "randomness" or lack of bias in the sample chosen. Statistical research has been conducted to establish standards for how many people must be interviewed from a total population to insure reliability of the findings to certain levels of confidence, eg. the figures are accurate plus or minus five percent. The level of confidence can be increased by increasing the number of interviews conducted.

Polls differ from questionnaires in that the responses are tallied by the interviewer. Mailed or self-completed questionnaires are completed by the person responding and are often more open-ended. Because questionnaires may be more

open-ended, they may provide more information, including information other than anticipated by the questioner. However, polls – precisely because they are not open-ended – have greater statistical reliability.

Since polls are normally designed and administered by professionals trained in polling techniques, the costs of polls are relatively high.

Refer to Chapter 1 for more information on the use of polling techniques.

## QUESTIONNAIRES \*

One effective method for soliciting public comment is through the use of questionnaires. There are similarities between questionnaires and polls, but questionnaires are usually completed by the person responding while the recording of responses to polls is done by the interviewer. Also questionnaires may invite open-ended responses, while polls limit the options.



*For me..... how nice..... just another wee survey?*

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QUESTIONNAIRES

The primary advantage of questionnaires (and polls) is that it is possible to reach out beyond the organized groups to the "unorganized public". Questionnaires, because they are more open-ended, often obtain more information than do polls. But the trade-off is that less structure also reduces the level of confidence that the information is statistically valid and reliable.

Refer to Chapter 1 in this volume for further information on questionnaires.

## WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

**W**ritten submissions in a public involvement program can be formally requested, as are briefs, or can be an informal response from the public in a public involvement program, such as letters, statements or unsolicited arguments that a group or individual may submit. In the case of an informal response, there would likely be no deadline for the receipt of submissions, and so the agency would not know when to cut off receiving submissions in order to begin content analysis.



# CONSULTATION TECHNIQUES

## BRAINSTORMING

**B**rainstorming is a group technique designed to increase the group's creativity. In brainstorming, everyone in the group is encouraged to come up with as many ideas as possible, including "way-out" ones. Usually these ideas are then recorded on a flip-chart or blackboard. No evaluation is permitted until everybody is completely out of ideas.

Brainstorming is a way of generating a large number of ideas or alternatives in a hurry. Other techniques must be used for evaluation.

There are also more "advanced" versions of brainstorming in which additional techniques are employed, using different types of analogies to increase group creativity.

### Advantages of Brainstorming

Brainstorming helps groups "break out" of the obvious solutions and push for more creative solutions. It also greatly increases the number of solutions which are generated.

Brainstorming provides a

"psychologically safe" climate in which people feel free to participate without fear of being judged.

### Disadvantages of Brainstorming

Some people may react to brainstorming as being gimmicky.

Brainstorming generates so many solutions that it is hard to evaluate them all afterwards.

## COFFEE KLATCHES

**T**he coffee klatch is a small group meeting usually held in a private home. The emphasis is on informality; the intent is to create the feeling of neighbors getting together to discuss local concerns. Typically coffee and cookies are served as part of the effort to create an informal feeling. The host or hostess will normally open the meeting, then turn the meeting over to the agency's representative. Agency staff will usually make a brief statement or presentation, then the remainder of the session is spent in informal discussion, questions and answers, etc.

Experience with coffee klatches has shown that be-

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cause they are held in people's private homes, people are on "good behavior" as a matter of courtesy to the host or hostess, yet there can be informal give-and-take.

Coffee klatches have proven very effective in rural areas, where they are a social event as well. A local district agricultural officer may be able to help identify families willing to host a coffee klatch.

#### Advantages of Coffee Klatches

Coffee klatches provide an opportunity for give-and-take between the public and agency staff, but in an informal atmosphere which does not encourage speech-making or polarization. Because of the informal atmosphere, the public often gets the feeling of knowing agency staff as people, not just in their official role. This helps break down antagonism and stereotypes.

#### Disadvantages of Coffee Klatches

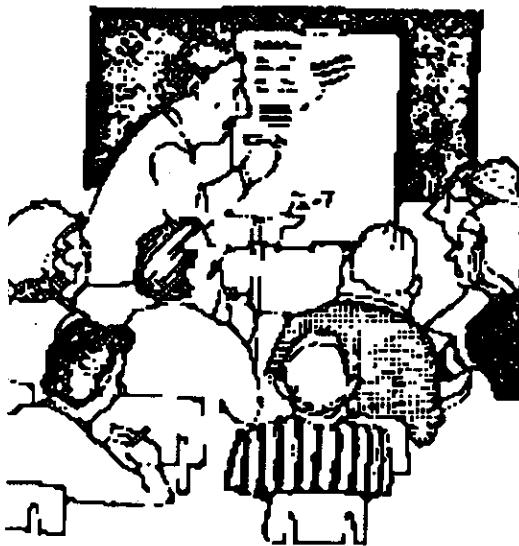
Because each coffee klatch reaches only a limited number of people, it can take a lot of coffee klatches to reach a large audience.

The term "coffee klatch" offends some managers, who somehow associate it with

women's afternoon teas, etc. Behind this initial reaction there may also be a fear of the kind of interaction which a coffee klatch requires. Coffee klatches are on the public's turf, and are less predictable than normal public meetings. The result is that some managers may feel personally vulnerable at the thought of informal interaction in someone's home.

#### CONFERENCES

A conference is a meeting of one or more days during which technical experts or representatives of various interests are brought together to discuss an announced topic. Often conferences include presentations either by guest speakers or by participants. Although the emphasis is typically on learning, a conference or series of conferences could lead to agreement among technical specialists on a controversial technical issue, or procure an agreement on priorities among interest groups. Even if there is not yet 100 percent agreement, a conference provides an impression of the "climate of opinion" among the leading experts, or can assist in creating a similar climate of opinion when everybody is exposed to the same data.



Conferences could be a useful part of a public involvement program if the decision making process involves resolution of a technical controversy. Examples of recent conferences on important decisions include:

- A conference of representatives from companies, agencies, and academia to agree on research priorities for developing methodologies for assessing the social impacts of rapid energy development — the so-called “boom town phenomena”.
- A conference of international scientists to discuss the state of the art of research on the storage of nuclear waste, and recommend future research priorities.
- A conference of environmental specialists from utilities and governmental agencies to discuss methodologies for assessing the cumulative effects of energy development upon fish and wildlife.

Other examples can be taken from almost any technical field.

Conferences which are intended to lead to some sort of agreement should be carefully designed to ensure interaction among people with conflicting points of view, rather than just the formal presentation of tech-

nical papers.

Another use of conferences is as a wind-up to a public involvement program consisting of responsive publications, Open Houses and planning workshops. The conference can provide a public opportunity for individuals and interest groups to present their positions to a large audience and the media. A typical format might be: introduction; half hour presentation by proponent; an hour for 6-8 interest groups to present their comments on the project in 5-10 minute presentations; open microphone for participants from the floor to comment or raise questions for the proponent or the interest group leaders (about an hour); lunch (during which time some participants will likely leave). The remainder participate in self-selected workshops on different aspects of the project for 1-2 hours and then report back for a closing plenary. Such a conference would usually be held on a Saturday. The proceedings can be videotaped and made into a short video (perhaps an hour) and copies provided to relevant cablevision stations and for use by the proponent and interest groups later. (Total video cost about \$2,000 for taping and editing). Note that the video must have a balanced perspective, and not just be

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sales job for the proponent.

### **Advantages of Conferences**

Conferences may lead to a "climate of opinion" or consensus of experts which can serve as the most informed estimate in trying to resolve a difficult technical question. Conferences result in a sharing of information and research which can often result in a change of opinions. Discussing the same topic for several days increases the importance of that topic to the participants.

### **Limitations of Conferences**

Conferences take considerable time and energy to plan. Also the cost of bringing leading experts together – often from throughout the country or world – is high. In addition to planning time, costs include transportation, room and board, honoraria (if any) and the cost of the conference facility.

### **THE DELPHI PROCESS**

**T**he Delphi process was designed as a means of obtaining a consensus on forecasts by a group of experts while attempting to minimize any dysfunctional effects of group dynamics.

To accomplish this, the Delphi process solicits the ad-

vice of a group of experts on questionnaires, provides feedback to all participants on the statistical averages of the responses, and reports on the reasoning of those participants whose answers differ substantially from the norm, while preserving the anonymity of the participants. The panel of experts is then invited to revise their initial responses as appropriate, and a final composite answer is derived.

The prime purpose of the Delphi process is forecasting, so it is useful in those cases where forecasts are controversial politically. Instead of having an agency technical specialist make all the projections – with the likelihood that these projections will be viewed as biased – the projections can be made by a panel of experts using the Delphi process. To the extent, however, that participation is limited to experts, the consensus among the experts still may not be shared by the general public.

Not only does the Delphi process appear to help experts work effectively in developing a consensus, it also has high reliability, i.e. two groups of experts forecasting the same event will tend to come up with similar predictions. The basic steps in the Delphi process are:

1) An open ended and unstructured questionnaire is submitted to each participant. This questionnaire asks participants to indicate their forecasts concerning the topic, eg. anticipated energy consumption in twenty years.

2) The person acting as "director" of the activity consolidates the responses and prepares a list of forecasts.

3) The director then distributes the lists to the participants and requests that they make an estimate of the occurrence of each event. ("Never" is one possible answer.)

4) The participants' responses are collected and a statistical summary prepared. The summary will contain the median and the inter quartile range for each forecast.

5) The statistical summary is distributed to all participants, who are asked to give a new estimate now that they have seen the summarized response. Participants whose answers fall outside the interquartile range are also asked to state the reasoning behind the answers.

6) These responses are then summarized statistically.

7) The new statistical summary, along with the reasoning of those whose responses are significantly different than the norm, is distributed to each participant, and a final estimate is requested.

8) A final statistical summary of these estimates is made.

### **Advantages of the Delphi Process**

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

### **Disadvantages of the Delphi Process**

The Delphi process may have a tendency to homogenize points of view and encourage "conventional wisdom".

The process of mailing questionnaires and redistributing summaries for several iterations can be time consuming and cumbersome.

Participants may prefer to interact directly with one another rather than through the agency, particularly if

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they are suspicious of the agency.

Delphi still involves a small group of experts, and the public may be no more willing to accept that opinion of a group of experts than it was to accept the opinion of agency staff.

## DIALOGUES

**D**ialogues are a form of conference initiated to improve communication between major interest groups such as industry and consumers. A group of 20-24 people are invited to attend a two day dialogue on a selected topic or issue. The participants could be two parties (such as industry and environmental interests) or they could be from several groups.

Representatives could be selected by an independent consultant who takes into account ability to effectively present a position without being unduly antagonistic or abrasive.

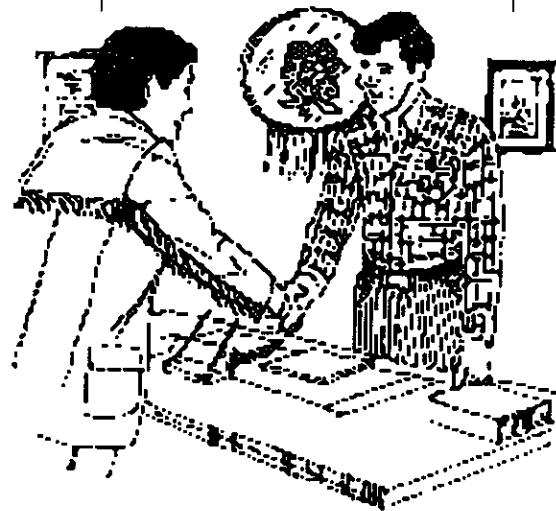
Dialogues are held in a retreat setting, with minimal opportunities to "escape" to nearby golf courses, etc. The schedule allows for ample socializing time, as one of the purposes of the dialogue is to encourage the development of personal relationships between the leaders of the interest groups.

The dialogue begins with an informal social event at which introductions are made. During the first working session which follows, each participant has 3-5 minutes to state his or her feelings about the topic being discussed during the conference. In subsequent working sessions there is a loose but adaptable agenda covering the major aspects of the announced topic. A neutral meeting facilitator helps the group stay on the track, encourages participation and makes sure everybody feels listened to.

The hope is that the interest group leaders will take back not only specific ideas, but also the feeling that open communication is possible and desirable.

### Advantages of Dialogues

Dialogues encourage open communication between management and leaders of groups that are often critical. The flexible schedule and retreat setting also encourage the development of personal relationships, helping break down stereotypes and role casting. Dialogues are often helpful in defining the points of common interest between the agency and citizen groups.



## Limitations of Dialogues

Dialogues usually focus on a broad general topic, and do not address specific actions which are under consideration. In fact, dialogue sessions are specifically designed to reduce the participants' perceptions of each other as adversaries. If a dialogue session were held as part of a public involvement program to consider a specific action, participants would be far more likely to have to defend fixed positions, and be less willing to drop barriers and get to know other participants personally. As a result, dialogue sessions are probably more effective as a general program of sensitizing management to the concerns of citizen groups, or whenever there is a general topic to be discussed, rather than as an element in a public involvement program considering a proposed action.

## FIELD OFFICES

**A**gency planners and decision makers often work far from the site of a study or project, or in some other way are physically isolated from people who are likely to be affected by a decision. A field office provides the opportunity for more informal interaction with the community. Typically, a field office is located in a highly visible part of the

community so that the largest number of people will know of its existence. A shopping center or downtown store front is a good site. On construction projects a trailer or other mobile unit could serve as a field office.

The field office is staffed by people working on the study or project who are able to answer questions and solicit opinions from the local community. The office is designed to encourage "drop-ins" and other types of informal interaction with the community, with exhibits, charts, maps, brochures, and other materials on display. Field office staff are encouraged to be involved as much as possible in the local community. If large enough, the office can be the site for meetings, seminars, workshops, open houses, and other events. By housing these activities, the field office becomes the focal point for participation in the decision making process.

A field office might also be particularly useful where there is a seasonal influx of users from a wide geographic area, for example, a resort area which draws tourists. The field office would facilitate participation by users who might otherwise be unaware of the decision or issue under study.

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DIALOGUES

FIELD OFFICES

### **Advantages of a Field Office**

A field office provides a visible means of informal interaction with the local community at the convenience of the residents.

The presence of a field office communicates the value the agency places upon community sentiment.

Field office staff often obtain a deeper understanding of community needs and desires than do agency staff who live and work far away.

### **Limitations of a Field Office**

A field office can be costly to staff and operate.

Unless the project or issue is of considerable local interest, the amount of use of the field office by local residents may not justify its cost. If more than one community is involved, those communities that do not have field offices may feel slighted.

### **LARGE MEETINGS**

**W**hen issues are controversial, public meetings may have audiences ranging in size from several hundred to several thousand people. Such meetings are often noisy, lengthy and occasionally confrontational.

The primary advantage of large meetings is that everybody has access to the same information, hears everybody's position, and observes the interaction between the various interests. This provides both visibility and credibility to the process.

But there can be problems with large public meetings. The first problem is that even though there may be several hundred participants or more, it is still possible to hear from only 20-30 in an evening. Although the sentiments of the audience can sometimes be surmised based on applause for speakers, often it is only possible to determine that there is a great deal of interest; the positions of many of the people who attend will remain unknown.

In the same way that large meetings are a good opportunity to communicate information, they are also a marvelous time for individuals or groups to make impassioned appeals to the audience to win them over to their position. The result is that there is often a good deal of maneuvering taking place by organized groups to be sure that they gain maximum advantage from the event. Organized groups may be sure the audience is packed with their supporters, may assign



speakers to cover particular topics in order to be sure that all their points get covered, and may make an effort to have their speakers called on at those points in the meeting when their presentations will have the most impact. Leaders of interest groups may even make demagogic appeals to the audience to walk out, keep agency representatives from speaking, etc. At times large public meetings can take on the air of a three-ring circus. And precisely because this is the one time that leaders must be seen defending the interests of their constituency in front of their own membership, there can be considerable posturing, and the likelihood that positions will be hardened rather than moderated by the meeting.

Another problem with large meetings is that they create the impression that "the public has spoken", resulting in the expectation that the agency is obliged to accept the dominant point of view at the meeting as the "true" expression of public feeling. In other cases there is a clear cut consensus, but it may not take into account other needs or interests, eg. a local community may oppose an action that has broad regional benefits.

Leadership of a large public meeting can either be very easy, if the audience is coop-

erative, or it can tax the most skilled of meeting leaders. Steps can be taken to increase the effectiveness of a large meeting, which are described in Chapter 2.

### **Advantages of Large Meetings**

Large meetings are an effective way of exposing a large number of people to the same information, the positions of all the interests and the interactions between interests.

Large public meetings provide visibility to the political process.

### **Limitations of Large Meetings**

Only a small percentage of the audience has a chance to speak.

There may be manipulation of the meeting by interest groups, creating an impression of public sentiment which does not accurately reflect the feelings of the general public.

Large meetings tend to increase polarization of positions, rather than encourage negotiations of agreement. Guidelines for conducting large meetings are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

## **Consultation Techniques**



### **LARGE MEETINGS**

## NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS

The nominal group process is designed to help groups generate creative ideas and information. It has also been used by some as a technique for generating consensus. The principles of nominal group process come from research suggesting that people generate more ideas and information when they work in the presence of each other, but do not interact at first. According to this research, when people interact in groups they are more likely to react to each other's ideas, rather than come up with new ideas. Nominal group process avoids this problem by having people generate their own ideas on paper before sharing the ideas with others, and by having people report their ideas in a structured manner which encourages production of the largest number of ideas. Nominal group process also results in a simple numerical ranking of the ideas generated by the participants. The complete nominal group process takes at least one and a half hours to complete. It can be expanded to occupy an entire meeting, or portions of the technique can be used as part of an overall meeting format.

Although nominal group process results in a ranking of ideas, this is more in the nature of a quick straw vote, and is based on only a minimal discussion or evaluation of the ideas. As a result participants must understand that the rankings they give are very preliminary and not binding. Careful staff analysis of the utility of the ideas may produce a very different outcome.

The procedure for nominal group process is as follows:

- 1) Opening Presentation:** After an initial presentation describing the nominal group process, the audience is broken into small groups of 6-9 participants.
- 2) Discussion Leader and Recorder:** Each group is assigned a discussion leader and a recorder. Prior to the meeting, these staff people will have put up a minimum of four sheets of newsprint, and also have ready a supply of felt-tip pens, scratch pads, pencils, and index cards.
- 3) Introductions:** The discussion leader will introduce himself/herself, and invite everyone in the group to do the same.
- 4) Posing the Question:** The discussion leader will then present the question which is to be answered.

This question will be carefully worded in order to draw out the specific information desired. This question will be written at the top of one of the flip chart sheets.

**5) Generating Ideas:** Participants are provided with paper and asked to write down all the answers they can think of to the questions posed. These notes are for their own use only and will not be collected.

**6) Recording Ideas:** Each person is then asked in turn for one idea. The idea will be summarized by the recorder on the newsprint, as accurately as possible. No discussion is permitted, except that people may suggest alternative wording to the recorder. The discussion leader will keep going around the room, one idea per person, until the group is out of ideas. Anyone can say "pass" without giving up their turn on the next round. The process continues until everyone is "passing". Participants are not limited to the ideas they have written down, but can share new ideas that have been triggered by others' ideas. Alphabetize the items on the list: A-Z, AA-ZZ, etc.

**7) Discussion:** Time is then allowed for discussion of each item, beginning at the top of the list. The discus-

sion should be aimed towards understanding each idea, its importance, and its weaknesses. While people may criticize an idea, it is important that they simply make their points and not get into an extended argument. Move rapidly through the list, as there is always a tendency to take too long on the first half of the list, not leaving enough time to do justice to the second half. This activity usually takes a minimum of about forty minutes, and can be permitted to take considerably more time if desired.

**8) Selecting Favored Ideas:** Each person then picks the ideas that he or she thinks are best. Instructions should be given to select a specific number, such as the best five, or the best eight. These ideas should be written on index cards, one idea per card. Participants may prefer just to write the letter of the item on the list (A, F, BB, etc.) or a brief summary, so that they do not have to write out the entire idea.

**9) Ranking Favored Ideas:** Participants then arrange their cards in preferential order, with the ones they like the most at the top. If they have been asked to select eight ideas, then they put an "8" on the most favored idea, and number on down to a "1" for their least

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### NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS

avored idea among the eight selected.

**10) Scoring:** A score sheet should then be posted which contains a list of all the alphabet letters used on the lists of ideas. Then the participants call off the items they selected, and the points assigned to each, eg. "G-eight points, L-seven points, A-six points, etc". When all the scores have been shared, tally the score for each letter of the alphabet. The highest scoring item receives the number one ranking, and so forth. Post the rankings for the top 5-10 ideas, depending on where a natural break occurs between high scores and low scores.

**11) Discussion of Results:** The participants may then want to discuss the results. Depending on the time remaining in the meeting this discussion may be brief or lengthy.

**12) Reminder of Subsequent Analysis:** Participants should be reminded that staff will conduct a detailed analysis of all items, not just the ones receiving high ranking. They should also be reminded that this analysis could result in a considerable change in the ranking of items.

### **Advantages of Nominal Group Process**

Nominal group process is an effective way of generating a large amount of ideas or information. It also provides a rough preliminary estimate of the acceptability of the ideas to the public. Emphasis in nominal group process is on the number of ideas generated, rather than on evaluation of ideas.

The nominal group process is a format which permits people of very different views to work together with a minimum of friction or disagreements. Having worked together effectively in this manner once, they may be able to work together more effectively in the future.

### **Limitations of Nominal Group Process**

As indicated above, nominal group process is good for generating ideas, but only does a cursory job of evaluating them. Detailed staff analysis of the ideas is still necessary.

Because nominal group process does generate a ranking of ideas, it can create the expectation that the agency is bound by these rankings, even though they are very preliminary.

Nominal group process is a

very structured activity, and people who come to a meeting to express their feelings, and particularly to win others over to their point of view, may feel restricted and resentful of the structure. Some people may feel "processed" rather than consulted.

## OPEN HOUSES \*

**A**n open house is an event at which citizens can drop in at a central facility during announced hours to view displays, ask questions, or discuss issues with agency staff.

The Open House is usually located in some valued local space eg. a room in a library, school or church, and runs from 2-9 p.m. so that it is accessible to mothers with small children, teenagers returning from school and adults before or after supper. Visitors may come at any time and stay for as long or little as they like. (In some rural areas in winter 1-6 p.m. works best.)

A series of display panels, arranged on easels in a rough circle, present the purpose of the project, the study team, various aspects of the issues, evaluation criteria, alternative solutions etc. Often a diagram on one panel is followed by a short text explanation on the next so the visitor can obtain a

grasp of the whole project without being led by the hand and talked at.

### Advantages of Open Houses

The primary purpose of open houses is to educate citizens regarding the study or proposed action. Open houses accomplish this in an informal manner, at the convenience of the participants. Because of the informality there is an opportunity for direct interaction between agency staff and citizens. This provides an opportunity to correct misinformation, and permits in depth exploration of citizens' opinions. It also permits the development of personal relationships between staff and citizens. With open houses, it is often possible to speak directly with more citizens than at a public meeting.

### Limitations of Open Houses

Open houses are primarily a tool for informing the public rather than getting information from the public, although it is possible to obtain public response through feedback sheets or response forms. To be effective open houses must be well publicized, and informative displays must be prepared. This can require considerable preparation

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and staff time.

Normally open houses are held at the convenience of the public, so may require evening or weekend time from staff.

Further information on open houses is provided in Chapter 2.

## PANELS

**O**ne technique for bringing out a range of ideas at a meeting is to establish a panel of experts or leaders who interact in front of the audience. The value of a panel is that interaction between the panelists can result in raising new issues, clarifying points and making the views of the various interests visible. If panelists do not interact, but simply make individual presentations, there is not much point to having a panel.

The alternatives in setting up a panel are either to select the individual who are most knowledgeable about a topic, or select people who can best represent viewpoints of the various interests. Some consideration may also be given to the mix of personalities to ensure that there is adequate interaction on the one hand, while avoiding undue antagonism on the other.

Panels may be effective either at the beginning of a meeting, to encourage discussion, or as a means of getting reports back from small working groups at the end of a meeting.

## Advantages of Panels

Panels permit interaction between experts or leaders which draws out ideas, facts, and issues in front of an audience. As a result they can be used to stimulate further discussion, or to educate an audience.

## Limitations of Panels

If the mix of personalities is not right, panels can be dull and uninteresting or degenerate into personal attacks.

Participation is limited to only those on the panel, even though others may have important ideas or comments.

## PARTICIPATORY TELEVISION

**S**ince television reaches a large number of people it has potential as a mechanism for public involvement, particularly since the advent of two-way cable television, which permits the audience to send signals back to the station. This could be used to sample opinion during the course of a television pro-



gram.

The major uses of television in public involvement programs to date include:

- Televised public meetings, so that people who cannot attend the meeting are aware of the information presented and opinions expressed.
  - Telethon or call-in shows with agency staff or other experts answering telephone calls from viewers. Questions or comments from viewers are recorded on a time-lag system so that they can be played back to the audience. These programs can be similar to television talk shows where a host, and often one or more guests, respond to calls. Or it is possible to use the telethon format with banks of people answering the phone, summarizing comments received, and sending questions or tallies to the announcer for communication to the audience.
  - A third approach is to broadcast a program which describes the major issues and alternative courses of action, and invites reaction either by phone, or with a mail-in ballot. In some cases viewers have been organized into small groups to view the program together, participate in a discussion following the program, then express their preferences by mail. Response forms have been distributed through churches, schools, unions, clubs, and so forth. The announcement of these television programs could be made through a newsletter, which could also contain a response form.
  - On a topic of considerable public interest it may also be possible to obtain a regular, eg. weekly bloc of time on a public or cable station. This program would allow for reports on activities, interviews with leaders of various interest groups, or even debates between representatives of different points of view.
  - There is considerable interest in the possibilities of two-way cable television as a medium for public involvement. A few cities, notably Columbus, Ohio, have installed such systems and use them as an effective mechanism for participation. The limitations on such systems have primarily to do with the technology, and the cost of installing response units in each home. Some response units permit full verbal response, while others permit only yes/no responses or selection of multiple choice answers.
- Although television holds tremendous potential as a medium for participation,

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there are also some limitations which must be faced. The bulk of the viewers will prefer to watch their favorite weekly comedy or adventure program, rather than participate in a televised public meeting. Only if the topic is of major public interest is there likely to be much of a viewing audience. As a result, it is difficult to get viewing time on major commercial channels. Instead coverage is likely be limited to public or cable television stations which have a considerably smaller viewing audience. So although the audience will be larger than the audience which would appear at a public meeting, it is still likely to be an educated elite of those deeply interested in the issue.

If television is used to solicit responses, there is also the danger that the responses will be interpreted as if they were a vote, with some expectation that they may be binding on the agency. The viewing audience of a television program is inevitably a nonrepresentative sample, and this is even more true when the viewing audience is small. Voting could also lead to abuses by interest groups, with the results telling more about which groups are well organized than about public opinion.

### **Advantages of Participatory Television**

Participatory television has the potential to reach a very large audience.

This technique is convenient for the public, since people can participate at home by viewing the program and responding by mail, phone, or two-way cable.

A well prepared television program can educate the public about the issues under consideration.

### **Limitations of Participatory Television**

Although the size of the audience will probably be larger than with other public involvement techniques, the audience will still be somewhat unrepresentative of the general public.

Complaints may be made that an agency did not fairly or objectively portray the issue on the television program.

A strong vote in favor of a particular alternative may be a function of an unrepresentative viewing audience, or careful organization by one of the interest groups, rather than an accurate representation of public opinion.



## PHONE LINES

People often find it very difficult to locate the right person within an agency when they wish to obtain information about a particular decision. A single telephone number that citizens call to ask questions or make comments can remedy this problem. This number should be easily remembered, and publicized in brochures, reports, news stories, paid advertising, etc. If the study area is very large or if agency offices are far from the study area, the number is usually toll free.

The phone line can be set up in several different ways. It can be a direct phone line to a single staff person whose responsibility is to answer questions and receive comments; it can ring into an office occupied by several staff people; or it can be put on a recording device for phone-backs. There is also potential for use as a phone-in tape library; people wanting information on a particular subject could be played a brief pre-recorded tape on that subject over the phone. If a recording device is used it can also provide information to callers by announcing the date, time and place of future public involvement activities. This can be used as a way of coordinating among members of an advisory group or others active

in the public involvement program. Instead of having to call everybody about a meeting, each member can call in and get the needed information from a recorded announcement. A recording device can also be used to record public comment, and incorporate this comment in any public record.

Although there are advantages to the use of recording equipment, many citizens do not like to talk to a machine, and will feel frustrated if that is all they can ever reach. If messages are left on a recording device they should be responded to promptly or credibility will be lost.

Obviously a major consideration in the effectiveness of the phone line will be the interpersonal communication skills of the people handling the phone calls. Defensive or insensitive responses to public comment may produce a negative effect that overrides the positive benefit of establishing a phone line as a means of communication.

Calling the phone line a "hotline" suggests immediate access and response; if an answering machine is used when the line is not staffed, then the hotline is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

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### Advantages

The phone line helps citizens locate those people within the agency who have the information they need, or to whom they should be speaking regarding specific issues. It can also provide a convenient mechanism for receiving public comments.

A phone line can be a useful mechanism for coordination of public involvement activities, since it provides a single source of information about the time, date and place of various public involvement activities.

### Disadvantages

Defensive or insensitive responses to callers' comments may produce a negative reaction from the public.

Staff must be prepared to provide information requested by the public promptly. This can affect other work priorities.

### PUBLIC MEETINGS

**W**henever people work together, meetings must be scheduled. During the course of a public involvement program there can be a number of meetings, often of very different types, from small group planning sessions to meetings attended by several thousand people. Meetings

vary in informality from coffee klatches in people's homes to formal hearings with a hearing officer, court reporters and registered speakers. Knowing how to design effective meetings that are appropriate to the situation is an essential skill in conducting public involvement programs. Refer to Chapter 2 for further information on conducting public meetings.

### SIMULATION GAMES

**S**imulation games are designed to provide feedback on the most likely results of making particular policy choices or decisions. By participating in a simulation game, citizens learn about the impact of decisions and the interrelatedness of various features of an environmental or economic system. The simulation game provides a risk-free opportunity for an interest group to take a position on an alternative and receive information about the economic, social and environmental consequences of that position, as well as the reactions of other interest groups.

Games vary greatly in their complexity and the length of time required to play them. Some games can be played with manual game boards or paper and pencil; others require the use of a computer.

Some can be played in a few hours, while others take several days. A game that closely resembles the real situation will usually provide the greatest information; however, a highly realistic game tends to be extremely complex and is therefore more time consuming to learn and play, and often less enjoyable to play. A computer assisted game can consider a larger number of factors than a manual game, but is substantially more expensive to develop and must be played where computer access is available. Numerous universities and consulting firms have developed simulation games, with various degrees of complexity and playability, that are available for use upon payment of a rental or consulting fee.

While simulation games are an effective educational device, they generally do not provide opportunities for the public to comment directly on the proposed action or issue being studied. As a result, they can be used to educate the public and gain enthusiasm for participation in the study, but they must be combined with other techniques designed to solicit comment directly on the issues or action being considered.

### **Advantages of Simulation Games**

A simulation game provides the public with information about the consequences of various policy positions or decisions.

It also provides the public with an understanding of the dynamics of an economic, social, or environmental system.

Participation in a simulation game is usually an enjoyable experience and participants often develop personal relationships that are maintained throughout the entire public involvement process.

### **Limitations of Simulation Games**

Many of the simulation games on the market are confusing, overly technical, or simplistic. Great care must be exercised in selecting a simulation game suitable to the situation. If a customized game must be developed, the costs are generally very high.

Simulation typically does not provide opportunities for comment on the proposed action or issue under study.

Since few games have a perfect fit with reality, citizens may apply the game's rules inappropriately in the real

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situation.

People may become so engrossed in the game that they forget about the real issues at hand.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

**B**ecause an agency can possess greater information than the public and access more resources, the public can feel intimidated by staff. One way to resolve this problem is to provide technical assistance to an advisory group or other representative body, or directly to the public. Technical assistance may include helping various individuals or interest groups analyze issues, evaluate the impact of alternatives, or develop their own alternatives.

Technical assistance can be provided by technical staff as part of their regular jobs, specific staff members can be designated as advisors to interest groups, or money to hire independent consultants can be provided.

A major purpose of providing technical assistance is to ensure that citizens can develop alternatives as technically developed as those of the agency, so that evaluation is fair and equitable. This is especially important when positions on issues differ substantially from

those of the agency. Also, in highly controversial situations, technical staff may be mistrusted, in which case the "facts" generated by independent technical advisors may be more acceptable than the "facts" generated by the agency's staff.

The choice between providing assistance with agency staff or with independent consultants is tied to the degree of trust between the agency and the interested publics. If there is a history of public animosity towards the agency, it is probably wise to use independent consultants.

### Advantages of Technical Assistance

Provision of technical assistance reduces the likelihood that citizens will feel intimidated by the expertise of technical staff. Interest groups can develop alternatives at a high enough level of expertise to enable equitable evaluation.

If some animosity exists between the agency and citizen groups, the facts generated by independent consultants may be more acceptable to the public than those generated by agency staff – even when they are in agreement.



### Limitations of Technical Assistance

If the agency is not open to alternatives, staff who are called on to provide technical assistance may be placed in a position of divided loyalties.

There may be a tendency to provide technical assistance only to the most vocal groups, with the result that a bias is produced in that direction.

### TOWN MEETINGS

The term "town meeting" indicates a meeting with no set topics in which people from the community get together with agency officials and talk about whatever is on their minds. No votes are taken, and the discussion is between the audience and agency officials. There is no fixed agenda, so participants can talk about any issues which concern them.

Because there is no specific agenda, the town meeting format may be more suitable to sensitizing top management on public concerns and creating a good relationship with the local community, rather than as a format for discussion of a specific proposed action. Town meetings might be repeated periodically in communities to keep communication lines

open and sense issues when they are first emerging.

Refer to Chapter 3 for further information on public meetings.

### Advantages of Town Meetings

Town meetings can sensitize management to the concerns of the local community, and may lead to early identification of problems.

Town meetings can develop a pattern of open communication between the agency and the community.

### Limitations of Town Meetings

Since town meetings do not have a set agenda they are not a suitable format for meetings on specific proposed actions or plans.

### TRADE OFF GAMES *OK*

Trade off games are a tool for helping people clarify their priorities and values, and in turn providing the agency with information on what is really most important to people. Often with public involvement programs, people participating in needs studies may indicate that they "want their cake and they want to eat it too". Trade off games are a useful way of helping people understand

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that budgets are limited, not everything can be provided, and of soliciting input on which programs/projects people view as the most and least critical.

The term "game" is used to indicate that usually a model of a real situation is used; plus there is usually an element of game playing and strategy involved, so the exercise is entertaining.

Games can be custom-designed for a given situation, such as housing issues or social services programming.

Trade off games usually require a workshop setting of a relatively small group of people. They are most effective if the people have already been involved in the program to some extent and have some knowledge of the

issues, for example, through having participated in earlier public meetings, a series of advisory committee meetings, or through having completed questionnaires. Carrying out a game requires a time period of two-three hours minimum, to explain the game, play it and discuss results afterwards.

### WORKSHOPS ✱

**W**orkshops are usually small meetings which are designed not only for the group to discuss a topic, but actually perform assigned tasks, generating a group "product". They can be established specifically around a problem solving task. Many of the guidelines for advisory groups apply to holding workshops (See Chapter 2).

# EXTENDED INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

## ADVISORY COMMITTEES \*

One of the most frequently used public involvement techniques is the establishment of an advisory committee. Advisory committees go under a variety of names, including citizens' committees, consumer advisory councils or panels, task forces, technical advisory committees, working groups, and so forth. While each of these names means something different, they all describe the establishment of a relatively small group of people who represent various interests, points of view, or fields of expertise, to advise on proposed actions.

For further information on advisory committees see Chapter 3.

## CHARRETTES

A charrette is a prolonged meeting or series of meetings that brings all the essential publics together in an attempt to achieve mutual agreement. The essential philosophy behind a charrette is to get together everybody required to obtain an agreement, and to keep them together until an agreement has been

reached. As a result, some charrettes are marathon sessions lasting an entire weekend or week. Some charrettes have even been twenty-four-hours-a-day ventures, with food and sleeping quarters provided to participants.

Three elements of a charrette are crucial to its success:

1. All major publics must be present.
2. All participants must agree to remain in the meeting, however long it takes to resolve differences and arrive at a plan that is acceptable to all parties.
3. All individuals who attend the charrette must come with the expectation that the product of the meeting will be a plan that is acceptable to all participants, and any decisions must reflect the consensus of all participants.

A charrette can help achieve agreement within a short time among various publics and agencies, or resolve an impasse among various groups on an issue which requires prompt resolution, eg. emergency draining of reservoirs, clean-up of PCBs and so forth. Without a

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sense of urgency, agency interest groups leaders may not be willing to commit the time to "hang-in" until the issue is resolved.

A charrette does involve considerable preparation, usually by a steering committee representing the key interests or agencies that will be involved.

#### **Advantages of a Charrette**

A charrette can be an effective means of achieving a consensus among conflicting groups or interests. As all the critical actors are involved, agreement on a plan should result in a commitment to implementation by all parties. In addition, participants in a charrette gain a better understanding of the positions held by other groups, and they may even change their perspectives. In fact, some charrettes have resulted in feelings of teamwork and cooperation that have extended beyond the individual issue which was the topic of the charrette.

#### **Limitations of a Charrette**

A charrette is effective only when all parties have sufficient sense of urgency or priority that they are willing to make the time commitment to participate until the issue is resolved. A charrette can only work if groups or agencies are willing to live with the commitments made by their representatives who attended the charrette. Also, because of the time commitment involved, some citizens are unable to participate in charrettes because of child care and work requirements.

#### **TASK FORCES**

**A** task force is a form of advisory group. The term "task force" is usually reserved for a group that has a specific task to accomplish, and then is dissolved, as contrasted with other kinds of advisory groups which are continuing in nature. Refer to Chapter 3 for detailed guidelines on handling advisory groups and committees.



# JOINT PLANNING TECHNIQUES

## ARBITRATION

**A**rbitration is a process in which parties to a conflict agree to the selection of a neutral third party who will serve as arbitrator.

Each side presents its position to the arbitrator who, after whatever research is needed, states what he or she believes to be an equitable solution. Arbitration can either be binding, when all parties have agreed in advance to accept the arbitrator's recommendation, or non-binding, when all sides reserve judgment until after seeing the arbitrator's recommendations. Even in non-binding arbitration the arbitrator's recommendation can carry considerable weight, since groups that will not accept the recommendation may appear to be unreasonable and lose either their members' support, or outside political support.

Normally arbitration is commonly used in those cases where the sides cannot reach agreement because for one side to get something the other must give up something, yet there is enough mutual dependence that neither side can afford to have the issue remain unresolved.

In recent years there has been an interest in applying the principles of labour/management negotiations to environmental or consumer controversies. This has resulted in an interest in the use of arbitration. For arbitration to work, however, there has to be an acceptable third party, and a political situation in which all sides lose more by having the issue unresolved than they do by fighting on.

### Advantages of Arbitration

The advantage of arbitration is that the judgment as to an equitable solution is made by an uninvolved third party, who takes the time to be thoroughly informed. Also, if arbitration is binding, or it is politically unacceptable for groups to oppose the arbitrator's recommendations, then the issue is actually resolved.

### Disadvantages of Arbitration

There are several preconditions which must be met before arbitration is possible:

- 1) All parties to the conflict must accept that they stand to lose more if they do not

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get a timely resolution than they could from any recommendation of the arbitrator.

2) There must be a third party acceptable to all groups.

3) There usually must be a willingness to live by the arbitrator's recommendations, or political pressure, which require that both parties take the arbitrator's recommendations seriously.

In addition to being useful only in limited circumstances, arbitration is also a kind of "last hope" technique. If it fails, the potential for conflict resolution is limited.

## CONCILIATION

**C**onciliation is generally an effort to improve communications between conflicting parties, to allow them to negotiate conflict. It differs from either mediation or arbitration in that there may not be any formal acceptance of the conciliator's role by the parties. To use an international example: i.e. One country may attempt to bring about better communication between two other countries that are in conflict. Because there is no formal agreement on the conciliator's role, either side may break off discussions without losing face. If the conciliation effort is success-

ful, the conciliation phase will end when the two countries formally agree to enter into negotiations or peace talks.

The ability of a federal agency to act as a conciliator may be limited since the agency may be a party to the conflict, rather than having the neutrality necessary to be a conciliator. Only if the conflict is between other parties could the agency act as conciliator. However, the agency could seek out a conciliator to assist in resolving any conflict in which it is involved.

In the future, regulatory bodies may be more active in adopting the posture of conciliator, attempting to work things out by mutual agreement rather than having to choose sides and perpetuate win/lose conflicts. An increasing number of regulatory bodies are encouraging applicants to conduct their own public involvement prior to presenting their application, so that as many issues as possible are resolved before the regulatory body is put in the position of having to choose between conflicting positions.

### Advantages of Conciliation

A third party may be able to bring about improved com-

munications leading to negotiations between conflicting parties, when it would mean a loss of face or power for either of the parties to suggest the desirability of negotiations. Both parties get brought into the conflict without any suggestion that one of the groups made the first move, which might imply weakness, or a soft position.

A conciliator may be able to clarify the positions of the groups to each other, removing stereotypes and identifying commonalities.

#### **Disadvantages of Conciliation**

The conciliator has very limited power in the situation and can pull off an agreement only if the sides are convinced they can win more by negotiation than by continuing confrontation. Without some kind of leverage or power, the conciliator is often unable to get the parties to the bargaining table.

#### **MEDIATION**

**T**he practices of labor/management mediation have been applied with some success in resolving controversies involving environmental and energy issues. The key element in mediation is the intervention of a disinterested third-party

who helps the parties reach agreements. The mediator not only structures the deliberations, but also serves as a conduit for communication among the parties.

Mediation is possible only when the various interests to a conflict believe they can accomplish more by negotiation than by continuing to fight. This will normally occur when all sides recognize that they have more to lose with a stalemate than through negotiation. A powerful third party may also bring about mediation if the threat of action by the third party is greater than the possible losses experienced in negotiation.

#### **Advantages of Mediation**

Mediation can result in an agreement that is supported by all parties to a conflict.

A mediator suggests productive procedure which enables parties to focus on the substantive issues of a controversy. Mediation can lead to a faster resolution of issues than other procedures that may be dragged out through the legal or political system.

#### **Limitations of Mediation**

Mediation, like negotiation, is voluntary. It will work only when all parties to the conflict agree to accept a me-

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diator. The technique requires the services of a skilled and credible third party mediator.

## NEGOTIATION

**N**egotiation is a voluntary process in which all parties in a conflict agree to sit down and try to resolve their differences. Parties agree on the procedures they will use, educate each other about their respective issues and interests, generate alternatives and evaluate acceptable options. If successful, negotiations result in an agreement that all parties are willing to live with. Decisions are made by consensus. Representatives are appointed with the understanding that the organizations they represent will have the opportunity to approve or disapprove of any agreements that are reached. Negotiation has been used in the environmental area to resolve differences over local projects and it has been applied to controversial federal programs and policies.

### Advantages of Negotiation

Negotiation provides a forum for all parties to educate each other about a problem and to jointly identify workable solutions. It provides an alternative to adversarial activities. This approach places the responsibility on all the parties to

find a solution that they all can live with. Agreements reached through negotiation are more likely to be workable and to be implemented.

### Disadvantages of Negotiation

All parties must be represented. Sometimes one or more parties does not want to participate. Because the process is voluntary, parties can drop out at any time and possibly terminate the discussions. Parties must be willing and able to act in good faith. The issues must be subject to negotiation. It can take more time to reach a negotiated agreement than it does to let a company or agency make a decision. It may be difficult to conduct when time is limited.

### NIAGARA PROCESS

**T**he Niagara process is a consultation/concensus building approach developed by the Niagara Institute in southern Ontario. It has been used in several instances by Environment Canada in the development of new legislation and is discussed in greater detail in Volume 2. It has been used to obtain consensus among a wide variety of interest groups, such as governments, industry, labour and non-government organizations. It is probably most appropriate for problem-

solving and policy development applications, rather than the environmental aspects of project siting.

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\* A bold entry indicates a chapter description.

## Appendix I List of Other Resource Materials

A considerable body of literature regarding public involvement has been developing in recent years. The list below is not all-inclusive, but does include most of the materials which would be of greatest assistance to people actually conducting public involvement programs.

### General

Ducsik, Dennis W., Edison Electric Institute's Workshop on Utility Experience with Advance Public Participation in Planning - Proceedings, Washington D.C.; Edison Electric Institute, 1982. A brief synopsis of a conference at which utility people working with public involvement discussed their experiences.

Creighton, James L. and Jerry Delli Priscoli, eds., Public Involvement Techniques: A Reader of Ten-Years Experience at the Institute for Water Resources, (IWR Report-82-R1), Fort Belvoir, Virginia: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Institute for Water Resources, 1983. A compendium of articles on virtually all public involvement techniques.

Jordan, D., et al, Effective Citizen Participation in Transportation Planning - Vol. 2, A Catalog of Techniques, Washington D.D.: U.S. Department of Transportation (FHWA), 1976. An early catalog of major public involvement techniques.

Langton, Stuart (Editor), Citizen Participation Perspectives: Proceedings of the National Conference on Public Involvement, Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, 1979. A collection of presentations made at the National Conference on Citizen Participation in 1978. Includes articles by most of the major figures in the field, and includes articles on consumer affairs and citizen action, as well as public involvement.

Connor, Desmond M. Constructive Citizen Participation, A Resource Book, Rev. Ed. 1985, Development Press, Victoria, British Columbia. A comprehensive collection of how-to-do-it articles, relevant professional papers and case studies.

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William D. Coplin, Donald J. McMaster and Michael K. O'Leary "Creating A Policy Profile" in Public Involvement Techniques: A Reader of Ten Years Experience at the Institute for Water Resources. James Creighton, Jerry Delli Priscoli, and C. Mark Dunning (eds.). IWR Research Project 82-R1, May 1983.

Environment Council of Alberta. Involvement and Environment - Proceedings of the Canadian Conference on Public Participation. Ed. by Barry Sadler. 1978. 2 vols. Edmonton, Alberta. The proceedings of this national conference serve to provide a theoretical overview of the state of the art of public involvement in environmental issues. Although ten years old, many of the issues discussed are very valid today.

Farrell, G. M.; Melin, J. P.; and Stacey, S. R. Involvement: A Saskatchewan Perspective. Prepared for the Department of the Environment, Government of Saskatchewan. Undated. A brief report, but with considerable substance. The report reviews various types of public involvement and briefly describes some of the various techniques.

Ministry of Forests, Province of British Columbia. Public Involvement Handbook. Prepared by Dr. Bruce Fraser. 1981. Information Services, Victoria, British Columbia. This manual is a "workbook" on public involvement in the forestry sector. An easy to use manual guiding practitioners in public involvement, well illustrated with diagrams and a fictional example drawn from the forest industry. The guidelines suggested are applicable to many situations beyond the forest sector.

Constructive Citizen Participation - a quarterly newsletter containing news items about the field from across Canada and the U.S., articles on techniques, case studies, and book reviews.

### Advisory Groups

Widditsch, Ann, Guide 2: Working Effectively with Advisory Committees, Washington D.C., U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1977. A very good short guide on working with advisory groups.

### Interviewing

Richardson, S.A., et al, Interviewing, New York: Basic Books,



1964. An overview of general methodology.

### Issues Management

Wilson, Ian. "The Benefits of Environmental Analysis," in Albert, Kenneth J. Ed. The Strategic Management Handbook, McGraw Hill 1983, pp. 9-1 to 9-19.

Coates, F.F. Issues Management. Lomond Publications, 1986.

Thomas, Philip S. "Environmental Scanning - The State of the Art".

### Mediation

Talbott, Allan R., Settling Things: Six Case Studies in Environmental Mediation, Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation and the Ford Foundation, 1983. A discussion of the use of mediation in an effort to resolve six environmental controversies.

### Meetings

Ragan, James F., Guide 1: Effective Public Meetings, Washington D.C.: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1977. A good short summary of what it takes to plan a public meeting.

Doyle, Michael and David Strauss, How to Make Meetings Work, Chicago, Illinois: Playboy Press, 1976. A best-selling book on designing and facilitating public meetings.

### Polls

Babbie, Earl R., Survey Research Methods, Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1973. An introduction to the field of survey research.

### Small Group Meeting Techniques

Gordon, W.J., Synectics, New York: Harper & Row, 1961. An excellent discussion of brainstorming techniques.

Delbecq, Andre L. and Andrew H. Van de Ven, "A Group Process Model for Problem Identification and Program Planning", Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Vol. 7, Number 4. A complete description of Nominal Group Process.

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Implementing Public Involvement Programs**

If you have any public involvement case studies which you think are noteworthy and would like to share with others in this field, have any interesting experiences using this manual, or have questions or comments, please contact FEARO at the following address:

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