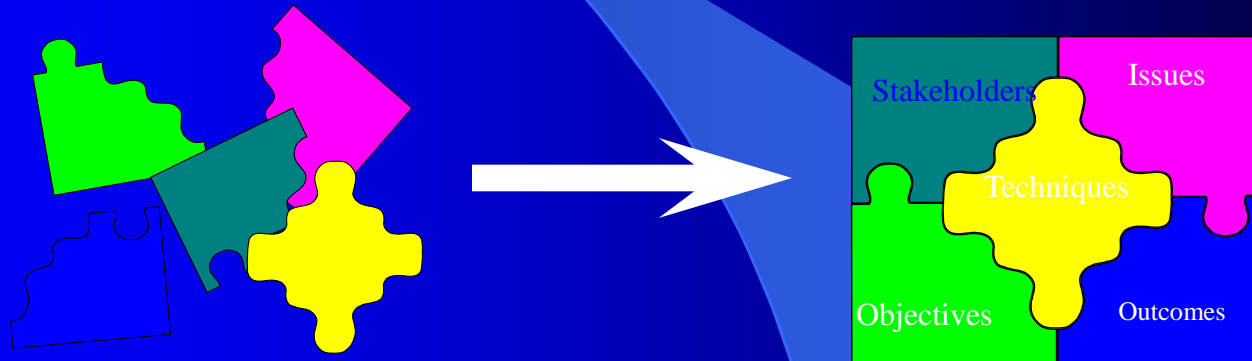


Building a Public Consultation Program

Putting the pieces together.



Definition of Public Consultation

Two way dialogue which improves the quality of decisions made (on an issue)



Dialogue made between an entity that identifies a problem or has a proposal and all those interested in or impacted by that proposal or problem

General Rules

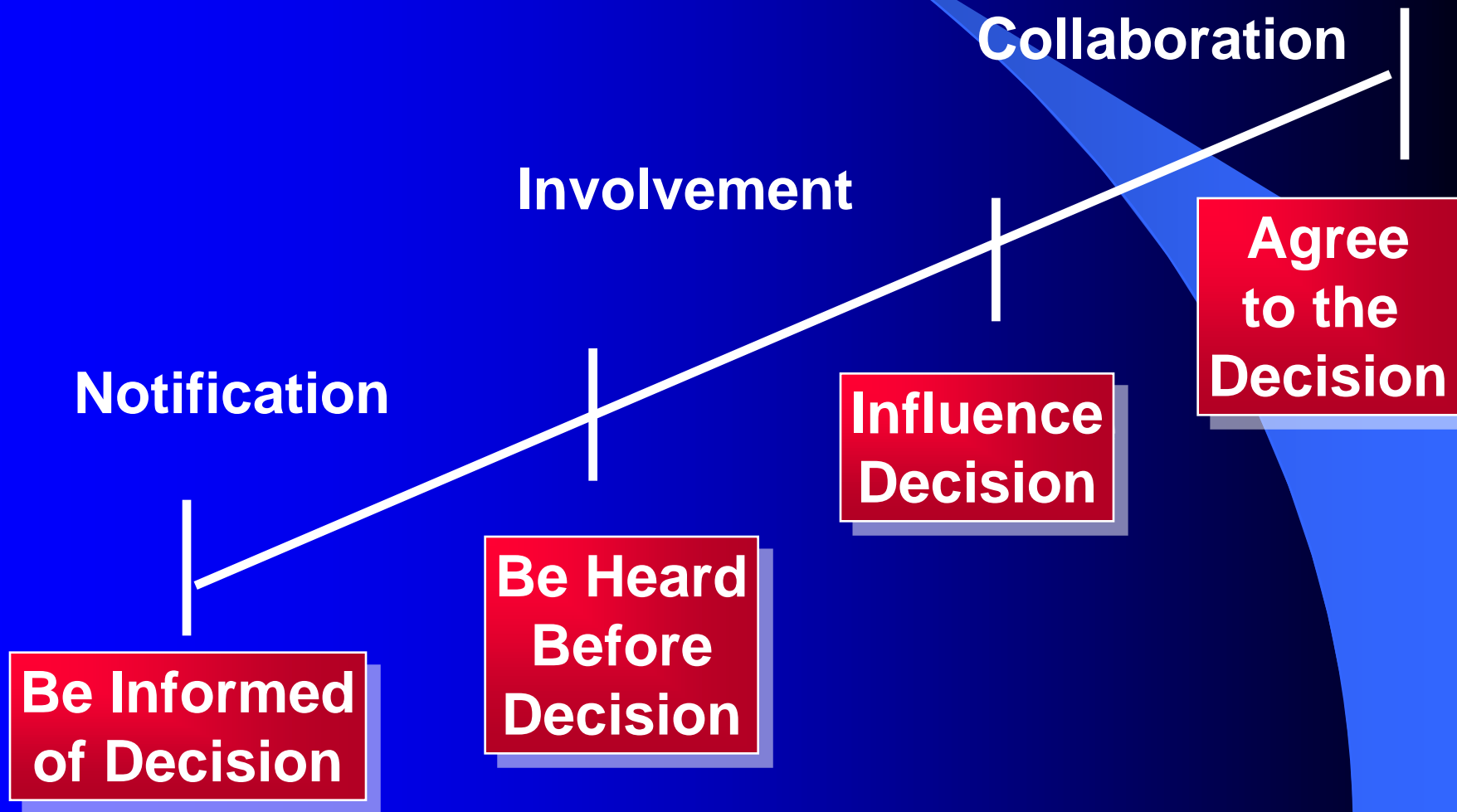
- **Senior commitment to the process**
- **Avoid pre-commitment to solutions**
- **Ensure credibility and capability of staff**
- **Sufficient time and resources.**



General Rules

- **Anticipate the issues**
 - Once you are in pain its too late
- **Know your community**
 - Past issues
 - Opinion leaders
 - Sources of information
 - Stakeholder expectations
- **Include internal stakeholders**
- **Have a communication/media plan**

Public Involvement Continuum



Technical Issues vs Values Based Issues

- Technical issues are issues of feasibility
 - You know they are technical if trained experts, given the same information, will come to approximately the same answers
- Values based issues are issues of desirability
 - There is no right answer, only tradeoffs in “public goods”

Is Public Involvement needed for this project?

- You can't involve the public on everything
- So decide which things you do absolutely require public involvement and focus on doing a good job on these things
- Factors which force the need for public involvement
 - Values based issues prevail over technical issues
 - There are optional responses to the issues and each impacts different groups of people
 - Public health or safety is involved or property values will be impacted
 - There is a long history of emotion associated with this issue

Step #1 - Define the Consultation Objectives

- **Different goals mean different approaches and techniques. This is the most important step.**
- **Possible objectives:**
 - Define the problem and/or obtain buy-in to the problem
 - Identify possible impacts and issues to be addressed
 - Generate optional solutions
 - Identify what criteria (and their weight) to be used in evaluating optional solutions
 - gain support for a solution (define level of support) once formed
 - maintain/enhance credibility

Step #2 Resource the Process

- Determine all financial, physical and financial resources needed and the timeline involved
 - Decide who speaks for the process
 - Decide who sponsors the process
 - Decide which decisions must wait for the process
 - Decide whether to use outside expertise

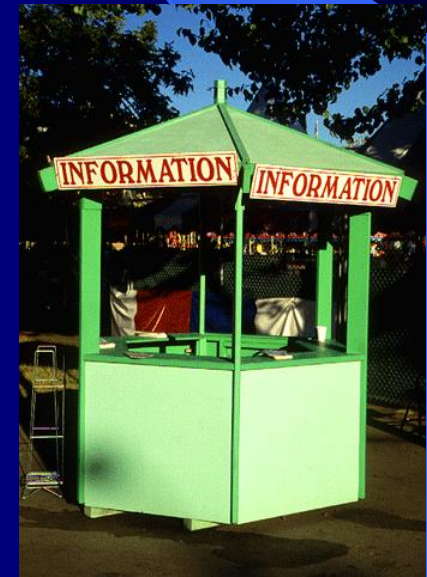
Step #3 - Identify the stakeholders

- Identify who is affected by, or may be interested in the project/program
- Interested parties should include supporters
- Typical segmentation
 - Government
 - General public
 - Special interest groups
 - Business groups
 - First Nations
- Don't forget internal stakeholders



Step #4 - Identify Public Interaction Objectives

- **Determine participants' roles.**
 - Different roles require types of information and interaction.
- **Define the information exchange**
 - What does the public need to know to participate effectively?
 - What needs to be learned from the public?



Step #5 - Identify Key Issues/Concerns

- **Understanding the issues allows you to target information and key participants**
 - Regulatory interests
 - Social impacts
 - Financial costs
 - Health/Safety needs
 - Economic impacts
 - Quality of life
- **Develop a stakeholder/issues matrix to assess the magnitude and importance of issues.**

Step #6 Select Participation Techniques

Public Information

- ☐ Website
- ☐ Mail-outs
- ☐ Newsletters
- ☐ Newspaper inserts
- ☐ Exhibits/displays
- ☐ Advertising

Information Feedback Techniques

- ☐ Surveys/focus groups
- ☐ Website
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Hotlines
- ☐ Stakeholder interviews
- ☐ Group presentations

Consultation Techniques

- ☐ Public meetings
- ☐ Public hearings
- ☐ Conferences
- ☐ "Coffee Clatch" Meetings
- ☐ Advisory Committees
- ☐ Open houses
- ☐ Task groups
- ☐ Workshops
- ☐ Stakeholder interviews
- ☐ Public Surveys
- ☐ Website and social media

Step #7 - Develop the Consultation Program Plan

- **Define schedule of activities.**
- **Link to information outputs / inputs to the project / program.**
- **Develop an outline for each activity**
 - objective
 - format
 - audience
 - logistics
 - responsibilities.
- **Implement the plan.**



Step #8: Program Implementation

- Be prepared:
 - program support, information materials
- Program pre-consultation to test effectiveness
- Proceed with caution
 - Start with opinion leaders
- Be prepared to adjust your course
 - Stakeholder roles and issues change over time
 - You can't say “we value your input but only on our terms”

Step #9 - Evaluate and Feedback

- Towards the end of the process you need to evaluate how well you achieved your public consultation objectives
- You need to feed that information back to participants in the process
- You need to clarify how their input affected the process and the decisions (hopefully, how the decisions were improved by their input)

Typical Process

1. Develop the PCP and obtain commitment to it
2. Do any background technical analysis
3. Notify the public and any group or individual that may wish to be involved
4. Identify issues to be addressed and commission any additional technical studies
5. Report out and solicit potential solutions
6. List optional solutions

Typical Process Cont'd

7. Commission any additional technical studies needed
8. Solicit Evaluation criteria (and weight of each) to be used in evaluating solutions
9. Evaluate solutions
10. Report out on preferred solution and obtain feedback on process and level of comfort with solution
11. Attempt to mitigate any outstanding issues
12. Final report out on preferred solution, evaluation of process and how input used to improved decisions

Selecting Public Involvement Techniques

Use a variety of techniques in the right circumstances to optimize the value of each technique

Web Based Info Exchange

Post information and ask for comment on it, or ask people to register for emails when new information is available, or conduct online surveys:

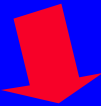
- ❑ You need to obtain a better understanding of issues and expectations.
- ❑ You have expertise available to manage the process but little new resources
- ❑ Target population is diverse geographically

 **Risk**  **Reward**

Social Media

Send out information and respond to individual inputs that all should see. Use this when:

- ❑ You want to drive traffic to a website
- ❑ You need to obtain a better understanding of issues and expectations.
- ❑ You have expertise available to manage the process but little new resources
- ❑ Target population is diverse geographically
- ❑ Information is managed in small bits or through links



Risk **Reward**

Stakeholder Interviews

Identify and meet with representatives of organized groups that are interested in and potentially affected (positively or negatively) by the project or proposal when:

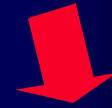
- ☐ You need to obtain a better understanding of issues and expectations.
- ☐ Conflicts need to be diffused.
- ☐ Organizations exist in a large geographical area affected by the proposal.
- ☐ groups have local support, credibility and are representative.

 **Risk**  **Reward**

Public Meetings



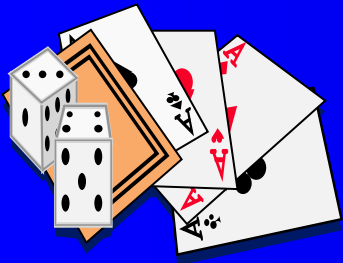
Risk



Reward

Public meetings can provide participants with an open discussion forum. Public meetings can be volatile and not always constructive. Use when:

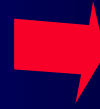
- ☐ Expectations for a public meeting are high.
- ☐ Interested/affected parties cannot be identified.
- ☐ You need to combine giving information to people with getting information from people.
- ☐ Lots of time and resources (including expertise) are available.
- ☐ No other options exist.



Public Hearings



Risk



Reward

Establish a credible panel of experts to hear presentations from interested parties when:

- ☐ Perceived independence on controversial issues is required.
- ☐ Legitimacy can only be achieved through arms-length process.
- ☐ Regulatory requirements are being assessed.
- ☐ Public hearings:
 - Set up a potential confrontational atmosphere
 - Do not allow for problem solving
 - Lack transparency and public acceptance.

Coffee Clatch Meetings

Solicit invitations to the homes of individuals to talk with small groups of residents affected by or interested in the project when:

The geographic scope of the project is very specific and small.



Reward

- ☐ A quick and inexpensive way of identifying and quantifying levels of interest and concern and/or specific issues is needed.



Risk

- ☐ Local residents are prepared to host such meetings.
- ☐ The issues are likely to vary geographically.
- ☐ You want to keep contact informal.

Advisory Committees



Risk



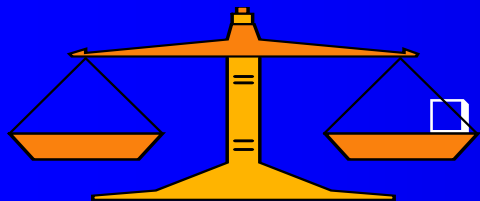
Reward

Identify credible and influential individuals likely to represent all sides of issues (both pro and con) and solicit their participation on a project or proposal committee when:

You are prepared to share some responsibility for the final solutions.

- ☐ You are addressing complex issues (e.g. integrated resource plans).
- ☐ You are prepared to invest significant time and resources.
- ☐ Affected parties feel comfortable with representing sector interests.

☐ You need to gain some credibility quickly.



Open Houses

Risk

Reward

- Develop display and handout materials, rent a public hall, schedule and advertise an open house. Staff with informed people, welcome those attending, answer questions and discuss issues with attendees when:
- Information out with some feedback is the primary objective.
- Problem solving is not required.
- You want to minimize the risk of confrontation.
- Lots of time and resources are available.
 - ☐ Affected parties cannot easily be identified.

Display/input Kiosk



- Develop display and handout materials, secure a location in a high profile area protected from the climate, schedule and advertise an open house. Staff with informed people, attempt to stop passers by, answer questions and discuss issues with those that stop when:
- Information out with some feedback is the primary objective.
- Problem solving is not required.
- You want to minimize the risk of confrontation.
- Lots of time and resources are available.
- Affected parties cannot easily be identified.

Technical Working Group

Reward



Risk



Establish a working group (8 - 12) of interested and affected individuals when:

- ☐ The issue is focused on a particular segment of the public.
- ☐ Stakeholders are easily identified.
- ☐ You need to have input at multiple stages of the planning process
- ☐ You are willing to share information and some control over the final solutions.

Workshops

Risk



Reward



Plan a working session with interested parties (representing the general public and specific interest groups) to talk in-depth about specific topics when:

Complex issues need to be addressed.

- ☐ Participants need to be informed/educated about a topic through background reading before the topic is discussed.
- ☐ You are willing to delegate some shared responsibility for the outcome with participants.
- ☐ You have assigned sufficient resources.
- ☐ You have a trained facilitator.

Other More Complex Techniques

- If time and resources are more extensive and the complexity of the issue is extreme and the importance and impacts quite dramatic, you may consider more complex techniques

Collaborative Problem Solving

- Participants in conflict agree to resolve their mutual problems by agreeing on a collaborative process.
- Participants define the process and are bound by the decisions of the group, unless otherwise stated.

Conferences

- For complex issues a community conference or stakeholder conference can be held
- Participants can be on an invited basis or drop in basis or registered, first-come first-in basis
- Start with buy in the process of the conference and then use competent facilitator to stick to it

Market Research

- Survey Research

- Public opinion surveys are valuable for obtaining a broad sampling of public opinion and behaviour.
- Not overly qualitative.
- Balances opinions of special interests.

- Focus Groups

- Assemble small discussion groups (15 people) to provide qualitative input key issues and alternative approaches.

Round Table Approach

- Stakeholders send representatives to a structured process where participants develop and agree to the process
- One important part of the process is to agree on how much agreement is required before we have “agreement” of the group
- Typically such groups operate under the “each person has a veto” paradigm
- Again, a trained facilitator is required to make this work

Support Activities

- **Information requirements.**
- **Communications plan.**
- **Support from other departments.**
- **External expertise.**
- **Systems for quick response to manage:**
 - crisis
 - approvals
 - decisions.

Selecting Suitable Techniques

- **Basic criteria:**

- Understand your mandate and authority
- What are participant expectations
- Assess the level of investment required in relation to the potential benefit
- Is there full management commitment and support

Elements of an Effective Process

- **Clearly defined decision context**
- **Explicit and structured objectives**
- **Measurable Indicators**
- **Range of options to meet objectives**
- **Transparent decision making process**
- **Feedback on how input was used to improve decisions and the degree to which objectives were met**