

Public Involvement Toolkit



November 2006

**Submitted by:
The Mayor's Bureau Innovation Project #9:
Public Involvement**

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Guidelines for Using this Toolkit

Introduction

The Bureau Innovation Project #9 team, an initiative of Mayor Potter that began in June 2005, developed this toolkit. A team made up of both city staff and public members developed the tools based on research and discussion of models from around the world. It was important to the team to develop a model that would be easy to apply to all city bureaus and create consistent expectations for the public, yet not limit the creativity or flexibility of public involvement staff.

Before the Toolkit:

Before a public involvement staff person starts using the toolkit, there are activities that should normally occur in the overall public involvement project. The Process Overview demonstrates a typical public involvement process¹. More about general steps and guidance for performing public involvement is available in the City of Portland's Outreach and Involvement Handbook, the third edition of which will incorporate the Toolkit.

First, project managers – be they public involvement staff, general project managers, or consultants – should perform, at the very least, an assessment of the project or initiative that includes the following:

- An environmental scan for related mandates, plans and other directives that may have bearing on the project,
- An initial stakeholder assessment, including considering whether this project may disproportionately affect a particular community or traditionally underrepresented community.
- A review of the goals and purposes of public involvement for the project, and
- An evaluation of resources available for the public engagement component of the project.

Once this preliminary review is complete, the toolkit can be drawn upon to further define the public involvement approach most suited to the particular project. The toolkit can also be used multiple times throughout the span of a project to assess options in a project's phases or to reassess in the event that circumstances change or modifications are needed.

How to use the Toolkit:

This toolkit is designed to be used, ideally with participation from a representative stakeholder group, to assess the optimal approaches and methods for engaging the public in a project or initiative. It is applicable to development and planning projects as well as policy explorations and general public education.

¹ Appendix A, page 4 of Toolkit

Consisting of a series of questions intended to clarify public interests and needs in the engagement process followed by a spectrum of approaches matched with tools and methods, this toolkit can help with identification of prospective options. Used with a stakeholder group, it can also help develop early public commitment to project success as public members participate in the development of the public process. The suggested steps for using the toolkit are as follows.

The Facilitated Stakeholder Meeting:

Step 1: Asking the Questions

Once an environmental assessment (see above) has been completed, convene a stakeholder meeting. Bringing together stakeholders with diverse perspectives and interests helps insure that the resulting involvement will respond more readily to community needs and values.

Referring to the list of questions², pose each question and allow all participants to answer the question in turn. If the group is very large, dividing into multiple small groups of 6-10 is recommended. As participants answer the question, the facilitator should place a check mark in the appropriate box. When all participants have answered, the facilitator moves on to the next question and each subsequent question in turn.

The facilitator should take care to ensure all voices are heard and that no answers are discussed or judged during this process. It is a free-flowing question and answer period, and all answers are equally valid.

Step 2: Assessing the Answers

Once all the questions have been answered in this manner, after thanking participants for their input, the facilitator should get agreement that the next step is to assess the group's general majority view on each question. The facilitator assessing the answer patterns, averaging them to determine a probable midpoint, and then affirming this with the group can informally accomplish this. Another option is to assign a number value to each answer and then average the answers for a mathematical average.

Step 3: Overall Scoring or Scale Assessment

After each question has been assessed and the average answer plotted, the facilitator should work with the group to come up with an overall score or location on the scale for the project. Some answers may seem to have opposing scales for this purpose. It is better not to focus on this, but to work with the group to determine a general rating or characterization of the project that will help point to the type of engagement and tools of engagement are warranted.

The questioning exercise can result in multiple positive outcomes. The facilitator, who is likely the public involvement manager for the project, will have a much better sense

² Appendix B, page 5 of Toolkit

of stakeholder views and issues. If the outcomes of the questions conflict with the limitations of mandates driving the project, this early warning system will help daylight potential sources of conflict so they can be dealt with early on. In addition, engaging stakeholders in discussing the community interest and positions regarding the project can result in early education as well as participation.

Step 4: Using the Spectrum

Once the project assessment using the questions is complete, the group can turn to the spectrum³ to discuss levels and methods of engagement. Usually, the facilitator will suggest a “landing place” for the project on the spectrum based on the question discussion, the question-by-question scores, and the overall score or outcome.

The group should discuss and come to agreement on the level of public involvement dictated for the project by the assessment. The ultimate choice need not conform directly with the “score” from the questioning exercise. It is important that the level of involvement take account of the answers to the questions but also other associated factors of the project – mandates, timelines, resources, geographic scope, etc.

Step 5: Determining the Appropriate Tools and Methods

Once the group has agreed where the project falls on the spectrum and understands the purposes and roles associated with the result, the facilitator can lead a discussion of likely tools and methods⁴ for ensuring public engagement at the determined level. This is the point in the exercise where stakeholder participation can be particularly effective in providing insights of which project staff may be unaware and in matching tools and methods to the community in which the engagement is to take place.

What Follows:

Putting the toolkit to use early in a project is an important step in developing a public involvement plan. Following these initial planning steps, staff should develop a public involvement plan that includes timelines, goals, benchmarks, and a detailed budget for the project’s involvement components. Common steps following the toolkit exercise are:

- Complete and gain approval for the public involvement plan
- Share the plan with your initial stakeholder group and incorporate feedback
- Launch and implement the plan
- Evaluate and revisit the plan as warranted
- Ensure evaluation of the plan’s success, especially with the initial stakeholder group
- Assess and report on successes and lessons learned

³ Appendix C, page 6 of Toolkit

⁴ Appendix D, page 7 of Toolkit

Additional Resources

1. Outreach and Involvement Handbook
(<http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=98500>)
2. IAP2 website (www.iap2.org)

APPENDIX A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLKIT, PROCESS OVERVIEW

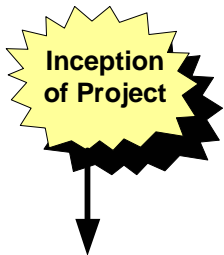
NOTES:

- ✓ This model should apply to any project, no matter where it comes from
- ✓ Assumption: process should be able to deal with 90% of the issues that come up

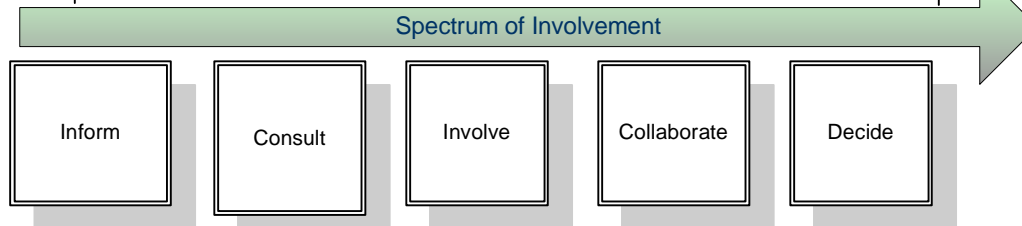
LEAST IMPACT
(light bulb change)

Incorporate:
 ✓ Course Corrections
 ✓ Early Alerts

MOST IMPACT
(Ice Rink)



Questions Exercise & Project Assessment with Stakeholders, see Guidelines



Choose Tools/ Methods



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN:

- Audience/ Stakeholder(s)
- Tool(s)
- Timing
- Goals
- Evaluation

Characteristics:

- ✓ Origin of the project (its history & prior decisions)
- ✓ Timeline
- ✓ Cost/Budget
- ✓ Scope
- ✓ Policy background
- ✓ Precedent/Mandate
- ✓ Urgency *
- ✓ Level of community interest

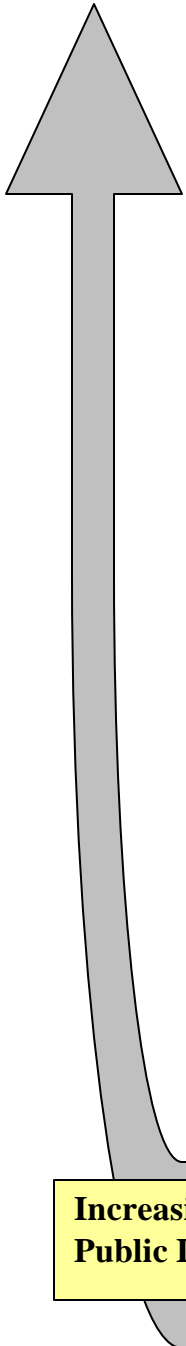
* perhaps hardest to identify due to limiting factors

Levels of Impact

Assessment Questions	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
1. What is the anticipated level of conflict, opportunity, controversy, or concern on this or related issues?					
2. How significant are the potential impacts to the public?					
3. How much do the major stakeholders care about this issue, project, or program?					
4. What degree of involvement does the public appear to desire or expect?					
5. What is the potential for public impact on the proposed decision or project?					
6. How significant are the possible benefits of involving the public?					
7. How serious are the potential ramifications of NOT involving the public?					
8. What level of public participation does Council and/or bureau directors desire or expect?					
9. What is the possibility of broad public interest?					
10. What is the probable level of difficulty in solving the problem or advancing the project?					

DRAFT Public Participation Spectrum

Level:	Public Participation Goal:	<i>The City will:</i>	Tools* to Consider:	<i>The Community:</i>
Decide	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.	<i>Implement what the public decides.</i>	#5 Committees #6 Feedback Mechanisms #8 Community Driven & Organized #9 Techniques & Methods	<i>Decides</i>
Collaborative	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	<i>Partner with public in each aspect of decision.</i>	#6 Feedback Mechanisms #8 Community Driven & Organized #9 Techniques & Methods	<i>Partners</i>
Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	<i>Work with the public to ensure that their concerns are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</i>	#5 Committees #6 Feedback Mechanisms #7 Formal Hearings/Forums #8 Community Driven & Organized	<i>Participates</i>
Consult	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	<i>Keep the public informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</i>	#3 Events/ Meetings #5 Committees #6 Feedback Mechanisms #7 Formal Hearings/Forums	<i>Contributes</i>
Inform	To provide the public with balanced & objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	<i>Keep the public informed.</i>	#1 Information/ Notification #2 Publications #3 Events/ Meetings #4 Community Education	<i>Learns</i>



Increasing Level of Public Involvement

*Refer to “Public Involvement Tools, by Category” on the next page for the full list of techniques.

Adapted from IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum (www.iap2.org)
DRAFT – October 2006 – Bureau Innovation Project # 9, City of Portland

Public Involvement Tools, By Category – BIP #9

#1 Information/ Notification	#2 Publications	#3 Events/ Meetings	#4 Community Education	#5 Committees	#6 Feedback Mechanisms	#7 Formal Hearings/ Forums	#8 Community Driven & Organized	#9 Techniques & Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisements • Advertisements, Newspaper Inserts • Advertisements, Transit Ads • Bill Stuffer • Clerical Information Contact • Email • Info Centers & Field Offices • Information Hot Line • Information Repositories • Media: Comics, Community Media/Cable Access, Feature Stories, Podcasting, Radio, TV • News Conferences • Postcards • Press Releases • Soap Box • Staffed Displays • Tabling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochures • Fact Sheets • Issues Papers • Mailings • Newsletters • Reports • Review Drafts • Websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Fairs • Community Forums • Design Charrettes • Door to Door/Canvass • Field Trip • Groundbreaking Ceremonies • Meetings with Existing Groups • Meetings, Virtual • Neighborhood Walks/Strolls • Open Houses • Roadshow • Summits • Tours • Open Houses • Virtual Open Houses • Web-based Meetings • Workshop, Computer-Facilitated • Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings to Neighborhood & Community Organizations • Brown Bags • Door to Door/Canvass • Panels • FAQ's • Field Trip • Media: Feature Stories & Editorials • Speakers Bureau • Staffed Displays • Tabling • Trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Committees • Citizen Juries • Commissions & Boards • Established Groups & Committees • Expert Panels • Task Forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Cards • Community Feedback Board • Door to Door/Canvass • Fishbowls • Focus Groups • Handheld Voting • Interviews • Large Group Study • Media, Blogs • Online Testimony • Polling: Computer-Based, Deliberative • Response Sheets • Surveys: Exit/Follow-up, In Person, Intercept, Internet, Mailed, Telephone • Tabling • Virtual Room 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Forums • Online Testimony • Public Hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coffee Klatches/ House Parties • Community Facilitators • Form New Community Group • Meetings, Community Initiated • Small Grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus Building Techniques • Deliberative Dialogue • Design Charette • Future Search Conference • Network with Leadership (esp. cultural groups) • Open Space Technology • Outside Consultant/ Facilitator • Popular Education • Role-playing • Samoan Circle • Study Circles • Technical Information Contact