



“working together”

Involving Community and Stakeholders
in Decision-Making

ISBN 0 7307 0243 X

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Produced by the Office of Citizens and Civics, Department of the Premier and Cabinet

For bibliographic purposes this publication may be cited as:

Government of Western Australia, 2006, *Working Together: Involving Community and Stakeholders in Decision-Making*, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Perth

Enquiries about this publication should be directed to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, telephone +61 8 9222 9888

Publication No 06/0000

<http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au>

message from the Premier



The fabric of our community is rich and complex. This complexity demands the collaboration of all sectors – government, community and private, in all their diversity. It necessitates that we take stock, debate the issues, listen to different points of view, take on board new ideas and agree to grapple with challenges, perhaps in different ways – and all of it to benefit the people we serve within our community.

My government is motivated by a desire to create a society in Western Australia that is strong, confident, compassionate and fair. A society that values participation, and the rights and duties that responsible participation involves. A society that values equity - in particular equity of access to services and information, access to economic and social power, and equity of access to resources.

We have a strong commitment to improving the business of government and recognise that in a complex and changing world we must be open to the fresh ideas and creative approaches that the community can and does offer. Through considered and well-executed consultation strategies, Government departments and agencies can access this wealth of ideas from a community that is ideally positioned to understand the impacts and effects of decision-making.

Ongoing engagement with the community is an expression of our commitment to the philosophy of shared responsibility between the Government, non-government organisations, the private sector and the community. It is only by working together that we will create a stronger, more inclusive society for all West Australians.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Carpenter'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping underline.

Alan Carpenter
PREMIER

foreword



We all recognise that being an active citizen is more than voting every three or four years. To function effectively, society needs active citizens to pay attention between elections, to become involved in public life, to listen to other viewpoints and to take a constructive role in the discussions that take place around them.

The WA Government recognises its responsibility to provide better ways to meaningfully involve both citizens and communities in the decisions that we make and to collaborate productively with the diversity that is the Western Australian people. Our common aim is on reviving public life within our communities, to devise new ways - or revisit some old ways - for citizens to come together around common concerns, to talk with us openly about issues, and participate in the decision-making that affects them.

Over the last few years we have promoted a number of new citizen centred approaches to decision-making across government and as a result, dialogues, citizens juries, deliberative polls, community forums and community reference groups (to name a few), have become part of the business of public administration. In previous guides we have advocated different processes for different situations and for different communities. At their core, however, each of these collaborative processes are about enabling the flow of meaningful information between our communities and government, to allow issues to be worked through, and agreements to be reached.

One of the critical success factors in policy and program development and implementation is recognition of the community as an important stakeholder. This guide extends the range of information available for those wishing to build their knowledge of community engagement. It brings together the learnings of those in the community engagement industry as well as national and international best practice to provide a framework for determining the extent and level of community involvement needed for better-informed decision-making.

The specific areas covered in this guide have been drawn from the feedback received from a wide range of consultative processes undertaken here in Western Australia. As a result, this guide increases the focus on the early phases of planning for community engagement – the importance of understanding what has been done before, and what information is already available in regard to current community concerns before consulting further. We have also included further techniques and tools to help ensure processes undertaken are clear, fair and ultimately rewarding for all those involved.

I encourage all agencies to make use of this guide when planning and implementing policies and programs. Working together we can utilise our technical expertise, alongside the insights from local communities and the people whose lives will be the most affected, to help ensure a better future for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony McRae". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hon Tony McRae, MLA
MINISTER FOR DISABILITY SERVICES;
CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS;
MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

contents

Overview	1
1.0 Introduction	2
2.0 Initial Considerations	4
2.1 Community Participation – Informing Policy and Program Development	5
2.2 Terminology in this Guide	6
2.3 Why Involve the Community	6
2.4 Meaningful Community Input	7
2.5 When to Involve the Community	7
3.0 Scoping your Project	9
3.1 Discovery	10
3.2 Understanding the Context	10
3.3 Understanding the Issues	10
3.4 Who Are the Key Stakeholders?	12
3.5 Identifying the Project’s Objective and Stakeholder Involvement	13
3.6 Understanding About Levels of Involvement	14
3.7 Determining Resource Requirements	16
3.8 Developing a Timeline	16
3.9 Next Steps	17
3.10 Establishing Community Working Groups	17
3.11 Gaining Agreement	18
3.12 Choosing a Consultation Method	18
4.0 Preparing the Community Participation Plan	21
4.1 Background	22
4.2 Key Stakeholders	22
4.3 Community Participation Objective/s	22
4.4 Defining the Question/s	23
4.5 Statement of Intent	23
4.6 Resources	24
4.7 Timeline	24
4.8 Participation Methods	24
4.9 Reporting	24
5.0 Making the Plan Work	25
5.1 Reflective Practice	26
5.2 Making Contact	26
5.3 Awareness Raising and Education	27
5.4 Communicate Ideas Clearly	28

contents

5.5	Practicalities	28
5.6	Providing Feedback	28
5.7	Facilitation	29
5.8	Collaborative Approaches	29
5.9	Engaging Diverse Groups	30
5.10	Ethical Practice	32
5.11	e-Engagement	33
5.12	Boards and Committees	34
6.0	Managing Significant or Complex Issues	35
6.1	Hazards and Outrage	36
6.2	Barriers and Constraints	37
6.3	Understanding the Potential for Problems	38
6.4	Avoiding Consultation Fatigue	38
6.5	Working with Advocacy and Lobby Groups	39
6.6	Dealing with Anger and Aggressive Behaviours	39
7.0	Evaluating the Community Participation Program	40
7.1	Ongoing Process Evaluation	42
7.2	End of Program Evaluation	43
7.3	Reporting on the Community Participation Program	45
	Summary	46
	Appendix A	47
	OECD Guiding Principles for Engaging Citizens (OECD 2001)	
	Appendix B	48
	International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum (http://www.iap2.org)	
	Appendix C	49
	Community Engagement Tools	
	Appendix D	52
	International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Code of Ethics available online at http://www.iap2.org	
	Appendix E	53
	Evaluation Criteria and Guidelines for the Effective Conduct of a Participation Exercise (Frewer et al 2001)	
	Glossary	56
	Resources	57

overview

The Guide is designed to assist Senior Managers when overseeing the scoping and planning stages of projects and programs with input from community and stakeholders. Early and ongoing involvement is vital. With any new policy or project, a feasibility study will assess the technical aspects but community views and perceptions must also be taken into account to ensure a successful outcome.

This Guide captures some of the critical components essential to determining the extent and level of community involvement needed at various stages for better-informed decision-making. It highlights the importance of incorporating appropriate stakeholder and community views early in the scoping and mapping stages.

The Guide will also be a useful resource for community engagement planners and practitioners.

People with expertise in this field are encouraged to browse through and see if there is some useful information they may not have considered. Those new to community participation will find this Guide a useful addition to their toolkit.

The Guide is intended to serve as a framework for thinking about the most effective and appropriate ways to involve the community to design and conduct community participation programs that meet real community needs.

There is no “right way” to approach community engagement. Each approach will be governed by the situation and circumstance of the project and will require adaptation and flexibility.

The Guide is divided into six major sections followed by Appendices, a Glossary and a Resources list:

- **Initial Considerations** sets the scene for undertaking community participation programs and defines a few key terms
- **Scoping Your Project** outlines the critical preliminary steps when scoping and mapping policy and projects to determine an appropriate level of community and stakeholder involvement

- **Preparing the Community Participation Plan** suggests a framework for developing a Participation Plan to guide your project through various stages from conception to output/outcome
- **Making the Plan Work** provides information on aspects to be considered when the plan goes into the implementation stage and provides instruction on how to manage the process
- **Managing Significant or Complex Issues** contains guidance on dealing with more complicated issues and/or polarised community viewpoints
- **Evaluating the Community Participation Program** explains the fundamentals to undertaking an effective evaluation and validation of the project

This Guide complements the Citizenscape website and other guides in the Consulting Citizens series which can be obtained from <http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au>.

1.0 introduction

The *Western Australian Citizenship Strategy* (2004) sets out the Government's commitment to working collaboratively with people for better-informed decision-making more aligned to community views and expectations. There is an acknowledgement that in doing so we are contributing to strengthening Western Australia's democracy through the promotion of active citizenship and open and accountable government. The Strategy supplements the *Better Planning Better Services: Strategic Planning Framework* goals of achieving "better opportunities for the community to participate in, and make creative and effective contributions to, government processes" and in building "effective partnerships with ... the wider community"¹. Both publications emphasise the key role that all citizens have in helping shape the community in which they live and contributing to good governance.

Active citizenship is about people having their say, being involved, taking part in decision-making, and, ultimately, making things happen. For this to occur avenues must be developed that encourage and support the active participation of citizens in the decision-making processes of government. It requires, in the first instance, that citizens be informed. No meaningful deliberation can occur without understanding, which requires access to timely, relevant and comprehensive information. There is also a need to identify and remove barriers to participation so that opportunities exist for all to participate effectively as active citizens. Finally, there is a need to establish opportunities in which citizens can question, become informed, have opportunities for dialogue and deliberation, reflect and make decisions in collaboration with government.

To facilitate this, the Office of Citizens and Civics within the Department of the Premier and Cabinet has published a series of guides to assist in developing public participation programs, such as:

- *Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide*
- *Consulting Citizens: Planning for Success*

- *Consulting Citizens: Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians (in collaboration with the Department of Indigenous Affairs)*
- *e-Engagement: Guidelines for Effective Community Engagement using Information and Communications Technology (in collaboration with the Office of e-Government)*

All of these guides are available from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and can be downloaded from the Citizenscape website at <http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au>.

Since the release of the first guide, the Office of Citizens and Civics has been closely involved in a number of important and complex public consultation programs conducted in Western Australia. This involvement has significantly increased staff appreciation of both the benefits and potential risks of these programs. The Office of Citizens and Civics has seen the results of poorly planned consultations and witnessed the difficulty in getting them 'back on track'. This Guide will reveal some of the common mistakes and provide a framework by which they can be far better managed.

Some State agencies have now developed internal policies and principles to support community engagement that are specific to their operations. This Guide does not replace these agency-specific guides but should be used as an additional resource.

Information contained within this guide amalgamates and builds upon the first two *Consulting Citizens* guides. Because each consultation will have unique issues and challenges, there is no 'one size fits all'. The aim of this Guide is to provide enough information for agencies to plan and implement appropriate community participation programs that will result in a positive outcome for both them and the community.

¹ Western Australian Government (2003a)

Core Principles for Public Participation

People should have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

Community participation programs will be undertaken BEFORE a decision has been made and contributions from the community will inform decision-making.

There is a recognition and acknowledgement of the breadth of community knowledge.

People should be involved as early as possible in the planning stages of a community participation program so that they can define how they participate.

The community participation program communicates the interests and meets the process needs of all participants.

The participation of everyone potentially affected will be sought and facilitated.

People will be provided with the information they need to be able to participate, deliberate and contribute in a meaningful way.

People's ideas and contributions will be noted as accurately as possible and made available for public scrutiny.

The community participation program is conducted with honesty and integrity and displays an awareness of, and respect for, cultural protocols.

Adapted from IAP2 Core Values at <http://www.iap2.org>

Government has a leadership role, and citizens expect government to fulfil it – after all, that is why they voted it into office. The question, however, is **less whether to lead than how to lead**. Governments can practice leadership in two ways. They can either practice leadership ignorant of citizens' direct concerns and input. Or governments may practice leadership open to citizens' concerns and input. This gives government the chance to tap into wider resources of citizens and civil society in order to develop better policies and gain more trust and legitimacy.

Strengthening government-citizen relations is a means for government to fulfil its leadership role in an open way and more effectively, credibly and successfully (OECD 2001: 23)

Refer to Appendix A for the OECD Guiding Principles for Engaging Citizens.

2.0 initial considerations

initial considerations

2.1 Community Participation – Informing Policy and Program Development

People are well informed about what is going on around them and are prepared to engage actively on issues that are of interest to them.

They are often uniquely well positioned to identify policy priorities, reconcile conflicting values, and help formulate the types of policies that will be the most effective within their communities. [Western Australian Government 2004]

In a democratic society all people have the right to express their view of the world around them. To support that right opportunities must be made available for people to communicate their hopes and concerns about matters that are important to them and for these to be heard and addressed. This requires that relevant mechanisms are established through which people can enter into a meaningful dialogue with policy and decision-makers to develop solutions for the common good.

This is not a new concept, but in the past some agencies have had:

- A lack of trust about the public's ability to provide creative and constructive input
- A lack of awareness of the benefits ensuing from an involved public
- A lack of clarity about how to involve people in decision-making processes
- Concern about over-riding the expertise and experience of public sector personnel
- Difficulty in reaching a good cross-section of the public.

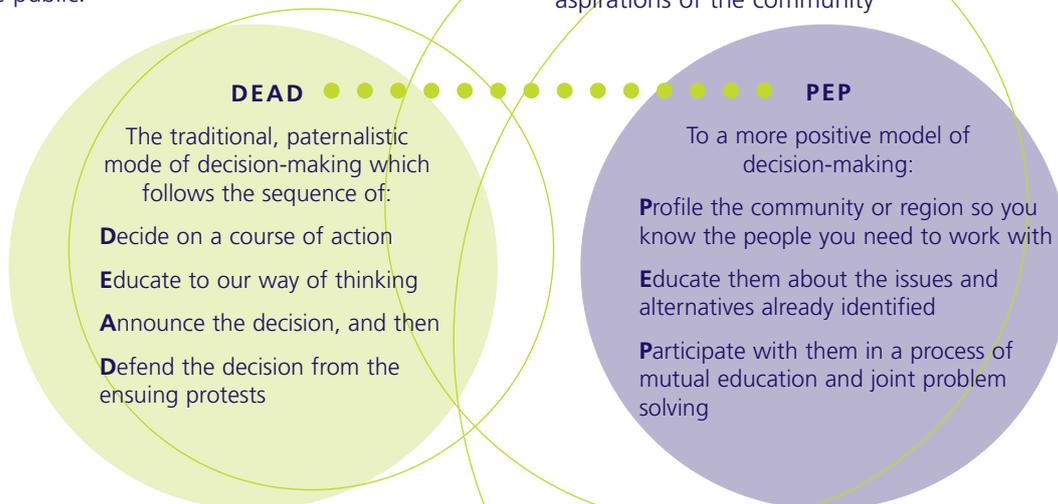
At the same time people in the community have often felt:

- That public participation exercises are just exercises in public relations or one-off events
- A sense that there is no commitment to act on the views obtained from them
- They did not have the time, resources, skills or confidence to contribute
- A sense of being a lone voice amongst many professionals.

These concerns have lessened as more people acknowledge the advantages that come from working together more collaboratively. In doing so, policies and programs can be developed that are far better informed and more likely to gain broad acceptance.

In Western Australia there is recognition that greater participation by citizens can:

- Contribute to better informed and better quality policy and decision-making
- Increase the chances for successful policy implementation
- Reinforce the legitimacy of the decision-making process and its final results
- Strengthen public trust
- Improve the level, profile and efficiency of public policy and services
- Raise awareness of issues and reduce potential for conflict
- Heighten democratic dialogue and revitalise civic culture
- Help in planning and prioritising various options
- Match decisions made to the needs, wants and aspirations of the community



- Offer new perspectives on, and solutions to, issues
- Achieve greater respect for different views
- Reduce uncertainties, delays and costs.

2.2 Terminology in this Guide

Community engagement is the mutual communication and deliberation that occurs between government and citizens. [Cavaye 2004]

The terms employed to describe the processes for facilitating public input and/or participation in decision-making are often used interchangeably – ‘consultation’, ‘citizen engagement’, ‘public participation’, ‘stakeholder involvement’, ‘community engagement’, to name a few. Regardless of the terminology they all lead to one goal – to bring people together to interact and achieve results that are of benefit to all parties.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has produced a Public Participation Spectrum (see Appendix B), which lists a range of participation stages from ‘inform’ to ‘empower’. For consistency, in this Guide the term ‘participation’ is primarily used to reflect the spectrum of processes that can be utilised to involve the public. Whether informing, collaborating or empowering, what is central is the active involvement of external stakeholders and the wider community.

Confusion also surrounds terms such as ‘public’, ‘community’ and ‘stakeholder’, which are also often used interchangeably. While the term ‘stakeholders’ is often used as a generic term to describe all participants, a distinction needs to be made between stakeholders as representative groups, and stakeholders as citizens or community.

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

‘Community’ stakeholders, on the other hand, are usually engaged in participation exercises as deliberators. Their role is to debate and consider the issue in order to come up with what is in the public good. Effectively they are asked to put their own interest aside to come to a decision that is in the interest of the community.

Knowing who the stakeholders are and the relationship they have to each other and to the issue will allow for greater understanding of their

differing concerns and how these perspectives might affect the project.

Throughout this Guide, the term ‘stakeholder’ is used to encompass the range of people who have an interest – from individual, to community, industry and government. Where referring specifically to community members’ input the term ‘community’ will be used.

2.3 Why Involve the Community

The 21st century presents us with many new challenges and opportunities. Considerable technological, economic, environmental and social transformations have greatly influenced connections between citizens and government. Some of these transformations include the following.

The changing role of government – there has been a realisation that governments do not have the resources, expertise or influence to solve all issues. Local government, corporations and non-government organisations play an increased role in the design and delivery of services. This does not mean that state government has no role, but rather an adjustment in thinking about how outcomes can be achieved is required.

Increasingly, government is more involved in ‘steering’ than ‘rowing’. This means its emphasis is on setting the overall direction through policy and planning, engaging with stakeholders and citizens and in partnering with others to deliver programs and services.

The difficulty for government becomes apparent when considering, for instance, the increased role of non-government agencies in service delivery, which distances the state agency from the detailed knowledge of the day-to-day operations of each of these organisations. To ensure that funding is being directed towards the most appropriate projects and programs, agencies will need to be better informed about changing community needs and expectations. The best way to achieve this is by seeking direct input from the community itself.

Emerging technologies – new technologies continue to change the shape of society and have an impact across all areas. People are much better informed and have access to a wide range of information from many sources. New technologies, such as the Internet, provide new opportunities to facilitate greater collaboration between government and people.

Community cynicism – it seems commonplace that people are disillusioned with the political process and cynical about the responsiveness of government to their concerns. Whether this is real or perceived it impacts upon levels of trust and confidence in public institutions.

Social Expectations – there is increasing demand for effectiveness and efficiency, greater accountability and transparency in government, and for a more highly coordinated approach in service delivery. Added to this is a growing expectation from people that their views be incorporated in decision-making processes.

A recognition of these trends and drivers has seen governments around the world adopt a more inclusive approach that acknowledges the importance of connections, emphasises collaboration across all sectors and repositions government as a partner with communities. With this recognition, governments are becoming more focused on benefiting from the experiences and knowledge of those who are most affected by policy decisions and project outcomes – the community.

2.4 Meaningful Community Input

It is likely that the single most important factor in the success of a public participation program is whether the agency is genuinely committed to public participation. [Les Robinson 2002]

To achieve meaningful benefits from community participation there must be a real commitment across the agency to the process of collaboratively involving people. This can be achieved through the development of:

- A culture of participation where all staff are supported and encouraged to engage with the broader community, and are provided with the training, skills and knowledge to do this
- Leadership from the top in demonstrating a willingness to embrace dialogue and deliberation in determining a way forward, both within and outside the organisation
- Holistic approaches to policy formulation and implementation, requiring consultation with the community and coordination across agencies
- Robust systems and processes that ensure accountability and transparency
- Promotion of inclusive practices and removal of barriers to participation
- Strategies that incorporate best practice guidelines for engaging with the community.

For government agencies committed to community engagement there is a need for greater coordination of practices and information. Issues do not occur along neat and bounded lines; therefore, solutions may require that multiple agencies, organisations and other stakeholders work together efficiently and effectively in a 'joined up' or integrated way. Through coordination the most far-reaching aspects of the issue can be addressed in a timely and efficient manner.

2.5 When to Involve the Community

Whilst most projects will gain from community participation, some issues will particularly benefit from public input. However, some issues that may be deemed 'straight-forward' should also include the opportunity for participation. This is not to suggest that all projects will require extensive public consultative processes, but rather that an assessment needs to be made as to the level of involvement offered to the community. The sensitivity and complexity of the issue/project and the diversity of opinions held will determine this.

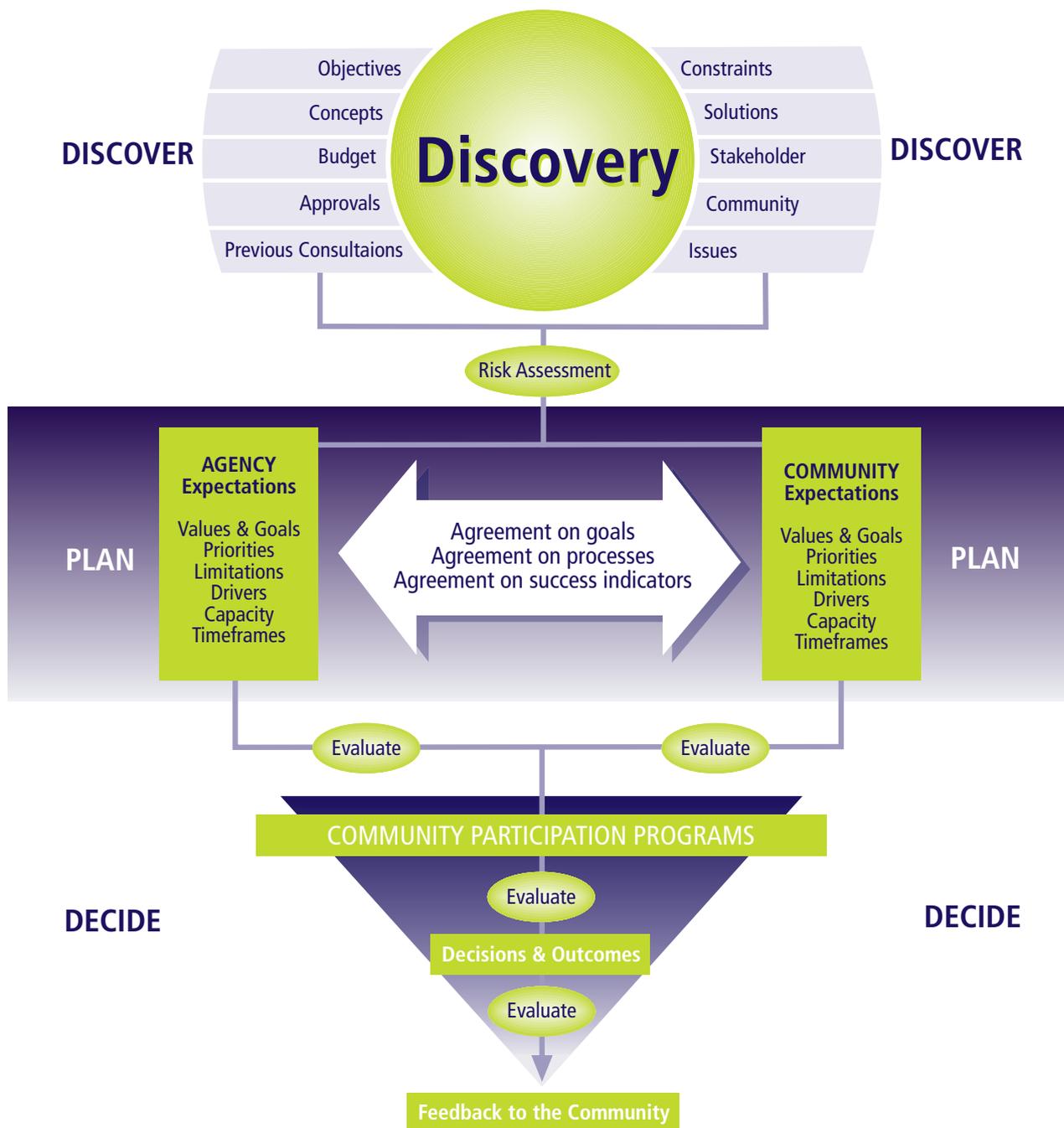
The following criteria may be useful in deciding which issues would benefit from consultation:

- The issue affects the rights and entitlements of members of the community or a significant group in the community
- The issue is likely to affect people's quality of life
- The issue affects the natural environment
- A significant number of people, or particular groups, are likely to have strong and/or competing views on the issue (both negative and positive)
- Insufficient information is available on which to make a decision about an issue
- The issue is technically complex
- The agency *genuinely* wants to find out the views of the stakeholders/citizens
- Agreement and acceptance by the community will be critical to the longer term success of the project.

It will neither be effective nor appropriate to consult if:

- A final decision has already been made
- Community input is not going to be incorporated
- The commissioning body cannot influence a final decision
- The issue requires an urgent decision.

WORKING TOGETHER INCLUDING COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS IN DECISION-MAKING





3.0 scoping your project

scoping your project

3.1 Discovery

Most projects contain a series of steps and a number of points where decisions will be made. At each of these decision points questions will need to be answered that will determine if and how the project will proceed. It must be decided if those questions are answered internally or whether they will require input from a wider range of stakeholders. That is, at what key points throughout the project will community participation be built in? Any project planned to alter or develop new policy, to change or add infrastructure, as well as any service delivery change processes, should be securely underpinned by an effective community engagement plan.

With all proposed projects a period of research, mapping and scoping is required to develop a fuller understanding of its issues and social impacts. This period of research is called the 'discovery phase'.

A comprehensive discovery will bring a clearer understanding of the issues under deliberation, identify the key stakeholders to the project – both internal and external, and distinguish key decision points.

Although in this guide 'discovery' precedes the development of a community participation plan and its subsequent implementation it is a process that will continue throughout the life of any project.

A discussion of the major components making up your discovery follows.

3.2 Understanding the Context

It is important to begin by having an understanding of the context in which the project is being developed.

Context refers to the existing conditions in which the public consultation is being developed and can significantly influence the consultation in terms of the process design, content and outputs. In terms of context it will be helpful to understand:

- The political culture of decision-making
- The culture of stakeholder participation

- Existing institutional or organisational capacity and practices
- The history of previous attempts to engage with the community
- The existence of deeply entrenched views (agency, industry and community)
- The scale of the project
- Budget and resources available.

3.3 Understanding the issues

Matters or topics of concern that may require community involvement might arise from a significant event, development or process about which there are differing views or perspectives. These may affect (or potentially affect) the timely delivery of a project, product or service and may also impact the quality of deliverables and the cost of production.

Issues emerge around topics from different sources. An issue may come to the attention of decision-makers as a result of normal reporting practices (e.g. ongoing monitoring, budgetary considerations, performance indicators, planning processes, etc) or may be highlighted only when community input has been sought.

It is useful to turn the topic from a statement to a question, as this can help you to identify different responses. For example:

- Topic: Cloning
- Issue: Cloning in beef cattle
- Question: Should cloning of beef cattle be permitted?

In this Guide we use the term 'issue' to cover a range of events or actions where a decision of some form is likely to be made. For example, a project can be based on a single issue, as well being made up of multiple issues. In the discovery phase there is a need to understand both the main project issue along with any potential separate issues within components of the project.

These issues can be viewed in potentially countless ways depending on a person's interests, background and experience. Therefore, how a

project manager understands and defines an issue can impact on the range of options made available and on achieving an acceptable outcome.

Issue identification will often be a continual process, with new (and previously unconsidered) issues emerging through exploration. Initially it must be determined:

- What is the background to the issue?
- What is the nature of the issue?
- Whose responsibility it is to address the issue?
- What is/are the decision/s being made about the issue?
- When will the decisions be made?
- Who has authority to make the decisions?
- What is the level of interest in the central problem surrounding the issue?

In the first instance, in order to develop your understanding of the issue, it may be useful to investigate the history surrounding the project. This will involve exploring the drivers that have brought this issue to your attention, the relationship between this issue and other major projects, between this issue and various stakeholders, and among the different stakeholders themselves.

It is useful to understand how an issue arose. Was it because of technological, social, economic or demographic changes; legal judgements; media attention; or international or intergovernmental agreements? Identifying the drivers for putting this particular issue on the agenda helps to fully define its underlying nature and clarify where the responsibility lies for addressing it. It may rest solely with one agency or responsibility might be shared across portfolios. Understanding this will have a significant impact upon how and where decisions are made and this will affect the extent to which stakeholder input will influence those decisions. It is critical that the final decision-maker is agreed upon in the planning process and recognised in the community engagement plan.

In many cases it will be necessary to approach key stakeholders to ascertain their perspective of an issue. This early contact will help to build up a better understanding of how the issue is viewed externally and will guide the scope and level of further opportunities for stakeholder and community involvement.

Keep in mind, however, that although there may be agreement between the agency and the key stakeholders in defining the issue, there may be differing interpretations of what form a solution might take. For example, it may be agreed that the issue is 'poor health in the community', but the preferred solution for the agency is to improve medical facilities, whereas the community wants to upgrade sewage system.

Another key facet is to ascertain the level of outside interest the issue is generating. Many issues will draw the attention of both the media and the community more generally. Where they impact directly upon people's lives or livelihoods you can expect greater interest. Proposed changes in the areas of health, education or policing will often be more closely monitored. Infrastructure and building projects that change the immediate landscape around people's homes and businesses will likely generate intense local interest. In these cases there will be an inherent risk to the project if you do not consult appropriately.

Carrying out background research will uncover whether any consultation with stakeholders has previously been undertaken and, if so, what outcomes were achieved. It is highly likely, as it becomes more common for agencies and organisations to consult with the public, that consultations are currently being conducted with some of the same stakeholders or at least have been in the not-too-distant past. The *ConsultWA* consultations catalogue provides a good resource of past and current consultations conducted by government agencies. *ConsultWA* can be accessed online at <http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au> and can be searched by region, topic or agency.

If other relevant consultations are found through that process of research then talk to others who were/are involved in these about the issues they uncovered, their list of participants, and any concerns that were raised by the stakeholders during their consultation.

Researching the history of the issue may also uncover whether there are any deeply held and entrenched views within the community or a history of tension between the community and the agency in relation to this, or other projects. At the same time, your research may also uncover 'champions' and supporters of projects in their local area. This information will assist in determining what method of participation will maximise the potential for positive outcomes.

3.4 Who Are the Key Stakeholders?

Who is a stakeholder? This Guide defines a stakeholder as any person, group or organisation with an interest or 'stake' in an issue either because they will be affected by a decision or may have some influence on its outcome. The identification of stakeholders is important; excluding an important stakeholder can undermine the process.

Stakeholders can be other government departments, local governments, industry and business, interest groups, peak bodies, non-government organisations, community groups, indigenous and ethnic groups, and individuals.

The following questions may aid in identifying stakeholders and potential participants:

- Who is responsible for the issue?
- Who might be affected by the issue, negatively or positively?
- Who will be impacted if the project does not go ahead?
- Who are the representatives of those likely to be affected, e.g. interest groups, lobby groups, peak bodies etc?
- Who can make a contribution?
- Who is likely to mobilise for or against the issue?

- Whose absence from participation will detract from the final result?
- Which government departments have an interest in the project?

Participants may be classified according to their level of engagement:

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

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

Browsers: those who will read about the issue in the newspaper, but do not or cannot investigate themselves. The majority form their opinions based on what the highly involved and attentives think.

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

For every phase of the project the role of different stakeholders should be reviewed. Over the course of a large project the relevance and participation of stakeholders may change. At each stage some will be more affected than others, be more active, or have more resources or knowledge. On lengthy projects stakeholders will come and go so the initial pool of stakeholders is liable to change as time goes on. This presents a challenge, particularly on those projects where it is necessary to build the knowledge of stakeholders to enhance their capacity to contribute. Good record keeping practices and allowing public access to historical documentation and decisions surrounding the project can help bring new stakeholders up to speed.

Also keep in mind that different stakeholders can make different contributions. Some stakeholders contribute primarily by means of their ideas and the information they possess. Others may have more material interests such as land or property that might be affected. Understanding the information that might be required from the community will assist in clarifying which stakeholders, based upon their types of contributions, should be involved.

Once the key stakeholders for the project have been identified, it will be useful to explore their previous participation experiences. Past experience is an important influence on community participation. People are often reluctant to participate if their prior experiences have been negative, particularly if they feel that their input has not made a significant impact on the outcome. They may also feel reluctant if they have been involved in a series of participation programs, which may or may not be related. Generally, it is the nature of the issue that will govern people's willingness to participate. Their past experiences, however, will influence the types of interaction that will occur.

If community members have been involved in previous participation programs, then the style of that past experience may need to be investigated. If, for example, stakeholders have previously been involved in some of the more adversarial approaches, then designing a consensual style of consultation may be more successful. This will sometimes need more effort in planning, and more time to assure participants of your commitment to finding consensual solutions, but the end result will be worthwhile.

A second important issue surrounding stakeholders is their relationships to each other, which may not always be positive. A failure to appreciate and manage the dynamics between stakeholders may lead to problems that will have a negative impact on the overall project.

One of the most important considerations in planning public participation is to solicit some level of stakeholder participation early in the project, beginning in the planning and development stages and continuing through implementation and review.

3.5 Identifying the Project's Objective and Stakeholder Involvement

The most intractable problems arise because organisations promoting participation aren't clear about what they want to achieve. [Wilcox 1994]

Having investigated the issue and identified the key stakeholders, the next matter is to clarify the objective of the project and the capacity to achieve it. This will have ramifications on the potential to involve the community in the processes of decision-making and the extent to which they will be involved.

There will be times when the scoping research and preliminary contact with key stakeholders identifies that the wider community is satisfied that the project should proceed promptly. In this case, it may not be necessary to seek wide community input, but there will remain a need for the community to be kept informed of progress.

If the research identifies that further and wider community input would be beneficial, it is important to be clear about the parameters of the project and identify any constraints or limitations. This might include such things as:

- The total allowable budget for various aspects of the project
- Timeframe allowed for completion
- Statutory requirements (e.g. Environmental Impact Assessments, Planning Approvals, Health and Safety considerations, etc)
- Decisions already made internally, by other agencies or by the Minister.

3.6 Understanding About Levels of Involvement

The level and extent to which you involve the community will vary with each project. There are a number of factors that will govern this, including the complexity of the information that must be relayed and understood before people can participate in a meaningful discussion. Additionally, the level and depth of community involvement will be influenced by the project's potential social, environmental, cultural or economic impacts.



What are social impacts?

A convenient way of conceptualising social impacts is as changes to one or more of the following:

- people's way of life – that is, how they live, work, play and interact with one another on a day-to-day basis;
- their culture – that is, their shared beliefs, customs, values and language or dialect;
- their community – its cohesion, stability, character, services and facilities;
- their political systems – the extent to which people are able to participate in decisions that affect their lives, the level of democratisation that is taking place, and the resources provided for this purpose;
- their environment – the quality of the air and water people use; the availability and quality of the food they eat; the level of hazard or risk, dust and noise they are exposed to; the adequacy of sanitation, their physical safety, and their access to and control over resources;
- their health and wellbeing – health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity;
- their personal and property rights – particularly whether people are economically affected, or experience personal disadvantage which may include a violation of their civil liberties;
- their fears and aspirations – their perceptions about their safety, their fears about the future of their community, and their aspirations for their future and the future of their children (IAIA 2003).

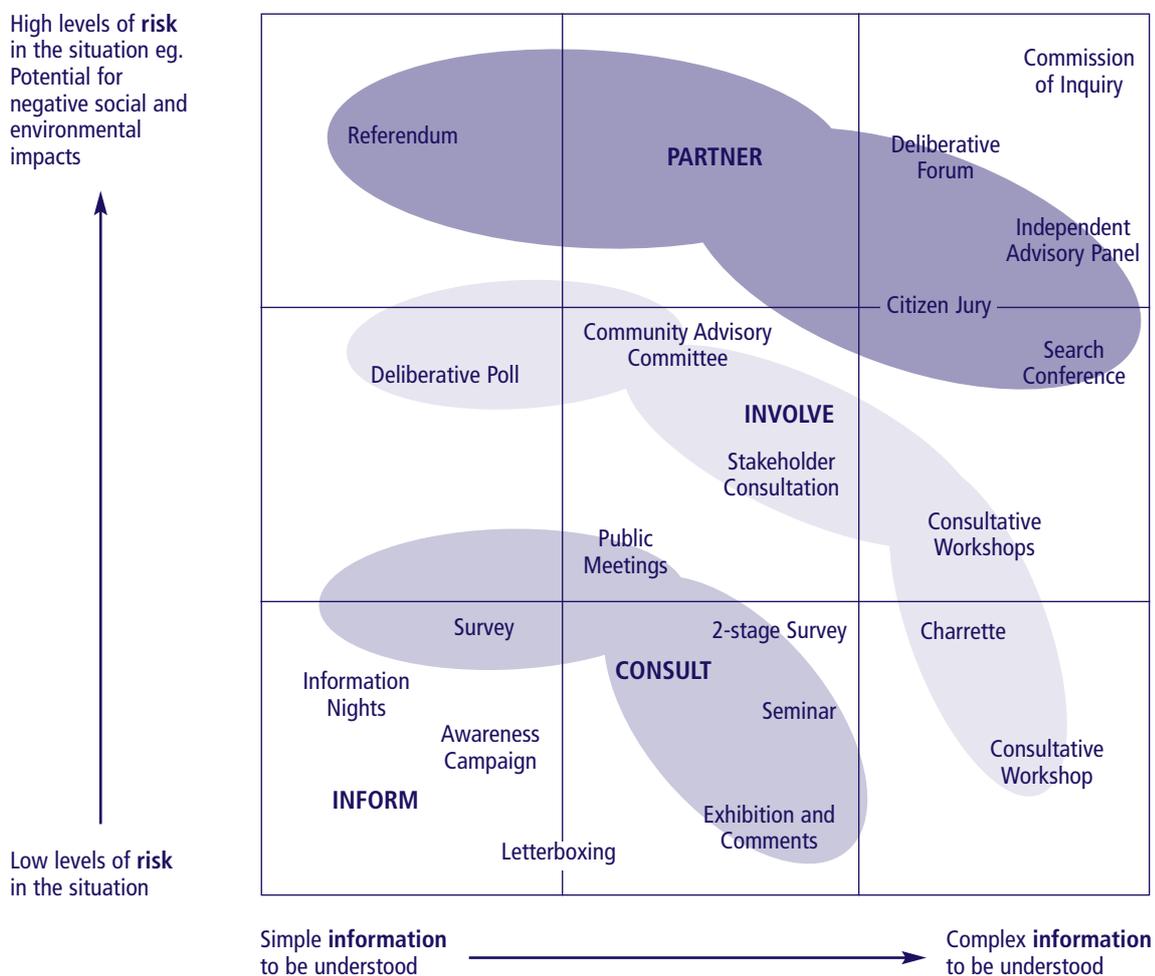
Determining the level of participation will be shaped by:

- How much information needs to be communicated to the community to enable them to participate
- How many abstract or technical concepts need to be digested before an informed decision can be made
- How much learning is required of the participants
- A determination of the potential for conflict with the community
- The potential for social, environmental or financial damage if an ill-informed decision is made (or no decision is made)
- The number of unknowns in the current decision-making equation
- The level of involvement expected by the community
- The ramifications of not involving the community at a high level.

It must be emphasised that although this information will be gathered early in the planning stages, it will continually need to be reassessed throughout the duration of the project.

On any given project a range of public participation processes will often be required. And many times the 'best fit' solution will involve a blend of two or more of these processes.

Les Robinson (2002a) has developed the Public Participation Matrix (see below) showing how the complexity of the information relating to the issue and the level of risk involved will influence the level of participation required by the community.



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3.7 Determining Resource Requirements

Personnel

A skilled team is essential for planning, developing, executing, monitoring and evaluating a consultation. The team may come from within the agency, may be contracted specifically for the purpose of the project or a combination of the two.

A community participation program will only be as good as the people involved in its implementation. It is, therefore, imperative to appoint skilled staff and to consider the following:

- Effective high level leadership is vital
- There must be a commitment to openness and transparency
- Personnel with skills in community engagement, facilitation, information dissemination, knowledge of the issues and so on are essential to keeping the consultation process on track
- Enthusiasm and commitment from the consultation team will directly impact upon the success of the project
- On complex issues, there may be a need to access expert advice by bringing in specially skilled and/or experienced staff into the organisation through the use of consultants and contractors.

It is preferable to have one clear point of contact between the agency and the community and/or stakeholders. This assists in providing a coordinated, unified message and ensures that the agency is speaking with one voice.

Budget

Where organisations are spending public money it is necessary to prepare a budget that provides for cost-effective ways to involve the community. Community participation need not be expensive – with resourcefulness it can be carried out with limited funds.

Some of the expenses that may be incurred include such things as advertising, venue hire, printing, postage/freight, child or respite care, parking/travel/accommodation, public address systems, stationery, consultancy, and audio-visual equipment.

Budget considerations are especially important on projects where contracts are awarded through a tendering process. In these situations community participation is often either omitted or given minimal weight due to the risk of significant cost increases down the track. To ensure that community participation processes are resourced adequately and maintained throughout the life of a project, it is beneficial to instruct that the engagement component is included as part of the tendered cost.

3.8 Developing a Timeline

Successful consultations are implemented according to a well-defined schedule, particularly for those consultations designed to report on a specific issue. Sufficient time needs to be allocated at every stage of the participation program to allow for proper monitoring and due consideration of process. Consultations that only allow minimal time for considered deliberation will only add to the level of cynicism some members of the community have towards community participation initiatives.

Consider the following points:

- Having a realistic timetable is valuable for all participants. It can indicate what they can expect (short or long term commitment) and when
- The timing of consultation may need to be adjusted to suit the schedules of participants critical to the success of the project. For example, conducting consultations after business hours, or outside of public or cultural/religious holidays
- Timing can also be important in a secondary way because some issues may be more prominent at particular times of the year (e.g. water consumption in the summer months)

- Ample time should be provided for participants to contribute throughout the consultation process, to become informed of the issues, reflect upon the information and make considered responses
- Consideration should be given to the meeting cycles of different organisations, and the time it takes for groups and individuals to be involved in formal discussions, debate and awareness raising.

3.9 Next Steps

Following the initial discovery, there should be a clearer understanding of the project and any other issues surrounding it. The key stakeholders will be identified and many will have been contacted already. In addition, resource capabilities and the timing for the whole project will be established.

With this information, the project manager will now be able to make a determination as to the next steps for the project, specifically what kind, and how much community engagement will follow.

If the discovery has shown that the issue is high risk and/or high complexity, there are strategies that can be adopted to address these. One of these is to establish a Community Working Group to help plan and build an understanding of community views and opinions.

3.10 Establishing Community Working Groups

On certain issues there may be a wide variety of potentially conflicting interests and concerns present in the community, but people who come forward to participate will not represent all of these interests. To gain a better understanding it is often useful to establish a Community Working Group to deliberate with and increase the likelihood of gaining a commitment to the process.

A Working Group is a small group set up with a specific task to complete, with members chosen for their appropriate skills. Working Groups are a good method for ensuring interested people can get involved and make a contribution.

[Community Working Groups] act as a sounding board for the proponent organisation, specialist consultants and decision-makers in the scoping, planning and detailed design phases of a project, in guiding the consultation with the wider community, and they may also play a role in the implementation of the agreed outcomes. [Turner 2002]

Community Working Groups are typically comprised of community members, agency personnel, representative groups, and may also include lobby groups, statutory authorities and the private sector. Selection of the participants can be achieved through a number of methods including:

- Publicly advertising for expressions of interest
- Inviting representatives of groups or organisations that have shown an interest in the issue
- Accepting self-nominated participants
- Random selection or equivalent method.

Each method presents its own challenges but selection will be aided by being clear as to the purpose of the group.

It is essential that the roles and responsibilities of the Working Group are clearly defined at the outset and this can be achieved through the development of a Terms of Reference. This will ensure that all members understand the decision-making powers of the group and the scope of issues that it will consider. The Terms of Reference for the group can also assist in defining the operation and format of meetings, issues such as confidentiality, and avenues of communication. Development of the Terms of Reference should be mutually agreed by all Group members at the first meeting.

Regardless of the representativeness of the group, it should not be assumed that it speaks for the whole community. Rather, it acts as a communication conduit between the wider community and the project team.

Evidence has shown that successful Community Working Groups will be focused upon the ultimate goals of the community participation program rather than the problems. It is important that members have a good understanding of their responsibilities to accurately and regularly communicate with the groups on whose behalf



they are advocating. To do so effectively may require resources be made available to facilitate the transfer of information from the group to the wider community and vice versa.

Before pursuing wider community engagement, it is important for the group to reach agreement about these goals of the community participation program. Establishing the goals early will also help to guide the development of evaluation criteria by which to judge the success or otherwise of the endeavour.

Generally, a Community Working Group will:

- Guide the community participation program
- Provide and agree on content (e.g. background information, objectives)
- Analyse and agree on participation process
- Promote the participation process.

3.11 Gaining agreement

It is important to manage the expectations of all involved in a community participation program. Participants who have been involved in the initial planning and agree with the process will more likely have realistic expectations of both the process and its outcomes. Reaching agreement on the consultation process and goals at the outset is essential to ensuring its success and will reduce the potential for the consultation process to 'go off the rails', from which it is difficult to recover.

It is also important throughout the community participation program to address the concerns of all involved. Participants who are well informed are less likely to become frustrated with the process. Ideally, participants should be informed upfront as to how their input will influence the decision-making.

Early agreement should include:

- Obtain commitments from all parties as to the goal of the consultation and their role in it
- Lay the groundwork for solutions that participants can understand and accept (even when they don't agree)
- Define those aspects that are negotiable and open to public input, against those that are not
- Decide on appropriate methods and techniques, taking into account timeframes, resources and objectives
- Outline the level of support and resources available.

3.12 Choosing a Consultation Method

Conducting community participation programs is not an answer in itself. Conducting *meaningful* and *aligned* programs that seek to achieve predetermined objectives will bring far more benefits.

A vast number of mechanisms can be used to facilitate the participation of the community in decision-making processes, from public meetings to written submissions to electronic surveys (see Appendix C). Each issue, proposal or policy has a different mechanism, or combination of mechanisms, that would be more appropriate depending on the variables present.

Some important factors need to be considered before determining how the participation of the community can be best achieved. Outcomes from the discovery will provide invaluable information on the most appropriate mechanism to deploy. Additionally, community participation programs will be governed to a large extent by the amount of resources, in terms of budget, personnel and time available to the project team.

It is best to adopt a 'fit-for-purpose' approach to community participation. In many cases when designing a community participation plan it is worthwhile to incorporate a range of participation methods (time and resources permitting) to allow for a diverse range of people across the community to have access to a variety of ways through which to participate.

To begin the process of matching participation method to participation program be clear about the following:

1. What is the objective of the community participation program? For example, is it:
 - To inform the community?
 - To gather information that will inform decision-making?
 - To exchange information?
 - To come to a consensus that all parties can accept?
2. What kind of information needs to flow to and from the community?
 - This will be influenced by the aim of the community participation program as well as the level of complexity of the issue.
3. Who will participate?
 - What is the demographic of the community (the range, interests and location)?
 - Are there institutional, geographical, economic, technological or physical barriers that will hinder participation opportunities?
 - What level of involvement and commitment is expected from participants?
 - What is the preference and needs of the community?

4. What resources are available within the agency?

- What is the time-frame allocated to the project?
- What is the level of community participation expertise within the agency?
- Will independent consultants need to be engaged?
- How much funding has been allocated to allow for community participation?

5. What resources are available in the community?

- Recognise that in some areas the community infrastructure required to support community planning and participation may be less developed than in others and will take time to build.
- What training do community groups and members require to develop the skills to participate as equal partners?
- What practical support (i.e. transport, child care, timing) will lessen the barriers to participation.

Regardless of the method chosen there will invariably be some disadvantages but these can be overcome to some extent if you:

- Are aware of, and able to accept the possible disadvantages of the method/s so that you can manage expectations
- Ensure that all involved in the project are also aware of the possible disadvantages
- Consider using more than one method of engagement to compensate for potential disadvantages of one method.

Conducting a thorough discovery will help to ascertain which approach is most relevant.

The following table provides some useful information to help select a participation method suited to different issues and/or objectives:

	Community Participation Methods									
	Future Search Conferences	Charrette	Open Days	Surveys	Advisory Committee	Public Meetings	Citizens Jury	Focus Group	e-engagement	Workshops
Allowing enough time for detailed discussion of the issues		✓			✓		✓			
Complex Issues	✓				✓		✓	✓		
Representativeness				✓						
Involving wide range of participants	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Monitoring changes in opinion over time				✓				✓		
Obtaining mainly qualitative (descriptive) information	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Obtaining mainly quantitative (measurable) information				✓					✓	
Providing opportunity for face to face interaction	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓
Including those who are hard to reach				✓	✓				✓	✓
Seeking a large number of participants				✓					✓	
Understanding participants values around an issue	✓	✓			✓			✓		
Project scope broad (local or state-wide)	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	

4.0 preparing the community participation plan

preparing the community participation plan

A Community Participation Plan (CPP) provides a brief for the participation components of a project. As such the size and complexity of the project will reflect the level of detail that is contained in the CPP. Similarly, the level of risk associated with the project will be reflected in the size and detail of the CPP. A comprehensive CPP should be developed for every stage of the project.

Well thought out CPPs provide a systematic approach that will maximise the use of available resources and minimise delays by ensuring that community participation is coordinated with other project tasks and milestones.

At a minimum the Community Participation Plan should contain the following:

4.1 Background

An overview of the relevant background information will include key events that have led to the development of the Community Participation Plan. It will describe the agency's role, any preliminary consultation that has taken place (and the outcomes from this), the level of interest, and a summary of the major issues that have been identified during the discovery phase.

4.2 Key Stakeholders

The Community Participation Plan will list all identified stakeholders such as government, local authorities, non-government organisations, landowners, local interest groups, schools, media, and any other interested individual. The plan will also define the most appropriate way of communicating with these groups and identify the best *times* or stages for participation. (If it is too early, people might not be interested. If it is too late, incorporation of their input becomes difficult.)

4.3 Community Participation Objective/s

There should now be clarity on the issues involved and what decisions need to be made, by whom, how and when. The next task is to clearly set out the objective/s of the consultation. This will need to be done for each issue and for each exercise to clearly state what you expect to achieve. For example:

- Contribute to the development of policy or strategies
- Evaluate service delivery or performance
- Establish service priorities
- Explore community needs or aspirations
- Foster a partnership with the community
- Make a decision between options
- Understand community preferences to inform decision-making
- Build trust between the agency and the community
- Find solutions that reflect community values
- Provide information.

In many cases it will be helpful to establish a statement of 'success' indicators for each participation activity. This may take the form of a statement such as *"This consultation will be defined as successful if we ..."* and should be approached from the perspectives of the agency, the community and from a wider departmental or Government perspective.

For example, success may be defined as:

- Achieving maximum inclusiveness through widespread communication of the process and opportunities for involvement
- Providing maximum clarity in communicating the scope, goals and expectations of the project
- Reporting accurately and comprehensively the nature and detail of people's contributions
- Presenting data so that people can recognise their contributions to the process and to the development of policy and recommendations
- Providing frequent feedback and information relating to emerging issues
- Developing good working relationships with all stakeholder groups and individuals
- Operating to a clear and realistic timetable that is sensitive to the needs and resources of individuals and groups

- Assisting individuals and groups, as appropriate and subject to resource constraints, in practical ways to participate effectively in the participation process².

Thinking about 'success' indicators for your community participation program will help to focus and define your objectives more clearly.

4.4 Defining the Question/s

When faced with a problem to solve or decision to make people often begin by searching for solutions. However, the difficulty is not necessarily about solving, but understanding the problem. In these circumstances the questions that are asked are more important than the solutions that are proposed.

The objective of the participation program must be clear in order to develop the questions to be asked. Questions will need to take account of the wider context surrounding the identified issue. By looking outside of the current context, it might be possible to identify other factors not previously considered.

Be aware that the 'wrong' question will usually be far harder to reach agreement on than the right one.

Seek first to understand the range of community views on the issues, along with the values behind those views. From here alternatives can be prioritised and sorted in line with the criteria provided. This is more beneficial than seeking the public's opinion of technical aspects of a project. For example, "how many intersections controlled by traffic signals?" versus "what is important to you with this new road"?

The key in framing questions is to be open and non-partisan, both in the question itself and the tone of the questioner. The questions should be equally valid for a person regardless of their position on the issue. Thus, asking "what are you most concerned about?" rather than "why don't you like this plan?" does not make any assumptions about the views a person might hold.

4.5 Statement of Intent

All participants need to understand the parameters and constraints of the project or policy and a Statement of Intent will help to clarify these. It should articulate the negotiable and non-negotiable items so that there is a clear understanding of the project constraints. Negotiable items are those choices and options and outcomes that can be changed to reflect community input. Non-negotiable items are those things already set that cannot be changed or negotiated and might include standards and policies that an agency must adhere to (environmental protection or cultural heritage), or the time and resources available.

Being clear from the outset about what is, and what is not, under consideration will help avoid unrealistic expectations. The reasons for items being non-negotiable must be explained.

Overall a Statement of Intent should include the following elements:

- What is, and what is not, open to discussion (scope of decisions, options and issues)
- The process by which decisions will be made about the definition, selection and refinement of alternatives
- The roles and responsibilities of designated decision-makers at all levels
- The roles and responsibilities of participants
- The agency's commitment to the process
- The agency's commitment to the outcome
- The agency's commitment to the provision of information to the public sufficiently in advance of meetings and decision points to encourage meaningful discussion
- Definition of success indicators.

² Taken from the Community Consultation Verification Statement issued by the Melbourne Water Authority following its program of community participation in the Eastern Treatment Plant Improvement project. Available online at http://www.melbournewater.com.au/content/library/current_projects/eastern_treatment_plant_upgrade/community_consultation_verification_statement.pdf

4.6 Resources

Personnel

It must be decided whether the consultation program will be completed with agency personnel or with expert assistance (e.g. independent facilitator or mediator). The Community Participation Plan should also make note of the key personnel including the Project Manager and community contact officer and include the roles and responsibilities of each position.

Budget Allocation

The Community Participation Plan should outline that sufficient funds have been allocated to the project to cover the personnel requirements, advertising and other consultation costs.

4.7 Timeline

A published timeline will help to coordinate specific community participation opportunities and techniques. It will allow participants to schedule their own time to maximise their opportunities for deliberation and participation.

The timeline may be divided into stages that identify each of the participation processes planned and link these to key decision points.

4.8 Participation Methods

It is likely that a range of participation opportunities will be available throughout the length of the project. Each of these should be listed (as per the timeline) with the objective identified and an indication given as to how it will inform the decision-making and future participation activities. For example:

Stage 1: Informing the community - shopping centre displays, information sessions, newspaper articles and letter drops. Advertise future opportunities for community involvement.

Stage 2: Identifying Alternatives - series of community workshops, establishment of advisory group, focus group discussions and call for public submissions. Prepare report to guide Stage 3.

Stage 3: Developing Design - establishment of technical advisory group to liaise with community advisory group, conduct community forums, shopping centre displays showing progress to date, newsletters, public notices in news media.

4.9 Reporting

One of the most important determinants of continuing community involvement is the level of openness in decision-making. Publicly reporting the outcomes of consultation processes and the decisions that emerge from them will be a key factor in ensuring that participants continue to engage with the agency.

Following the evaluation at the end of the community participation program, a report should be prepared that enables those who have invested time and energy to find out the outcomes and end result of the project.

The Community Participation Plan should state what reports will be made available, when they are likely to be available and how to access them.



5.0 making the plan work

making the plan work

The detailed scoping, planning and design of the Community Participation Plan will be followed by its implementation when the agency can demonstrate its commitment to involving the community. Even with the best planning and preparation unforeseen situations can arise. The key to overcoming these is to constantly monitor the progress of the program and be flexible enough to adapt as changing situations arise.

The following section outlines various aspects for consideration during implementation.

5.1 Reflective Practice

An important success factor in community participation programs rests in knowing that it will be a dynamic exercise, which is bound to raise new challenges as often as it solves old problems. It is a process of continuous learning for the community and the agency - before, during and after the exercise.

Reflection throughout the process, coupled with regular and ongoing evaluation and monitoring is required to ensure the program is still heading in the right direction. It may mean a rethink of the process and who is involved. This is where *flexibility* and adaptability are of prime importance.

Reflective practice is not about uncovering mistakes, but about learning and generating new knowledge that can guide future action. It gives an opportunity to say 'this won't work - let's fix it' rather than persevering with what may turn out to be an ineffective plan.

5.2 Making Contact

The Community Participation Plan will help to identify the best ways of contacting interested people (the 'stakeholders'). Locating and engaging participants can be challenging and may require innovative approaches. Community Service Directories, local newspapers, radio stations and the Internet are good places to start. To ensure those with particular interests are not the only ones listened to, random sampling of the population is an important way of ensuring broader representation. Random samples can also be stratified (e.g. by age, gender, location, education) to ensure the sample reflects the

population under discussion. The electoral roll is one source of accessing a statistically representative group of citizens. Local government councils often have demographic profiles available which can also be useful.

Participants can be contacted through a number of methods including:

- Random sampling via the post, telephone, shopping centres, household visits, etc
- Postal contact (letters, leaflets, mail outs) – has wide contact but may achieve poor returns
- Visits – dialogue often takes longer and more staff time needed but feedback is better
- Site boards – suitable for information bulletins, progress notes where information is factual and not controversial
- Exhibitions – information is managed by the agency, it engages people, but must actively record feedback
- Press releases, features, radio, television – wide coverage, but the outcome is not always predictable
- Public meetings – need careful management as they can be very emotive (local orators, pressure groups, politics)
- Projects with others – excellent way of involving community at all levels, schools, local interest groups, business, residents, etc.

Without special assistance some individuals may be restricted in their ability to participate. This may be aided through the provision of travel assistance, payment for child-care, or through the provision of interpreters or audio-visual aids.

Additionally, in a state as large and sparsely populated as Western Australia, special consideration must be given to remote and regional communities to avoid these citizens feeling and/or being isolated and marginalised. Innovative methods may need to be developed to ensure participation of remotely located citizens. Some of the new developments in online consultation have been addressed in the recently released *e-Engagement Guide*, which can be downloaded from the Citizenscape website.

5.3 Awareness Raising and Education

Raising the public's understanding and awareness of the technical aspects that will impact the issues is an important first step in any public participation program. There are three aspects to awareness raising.

The first is directed towards ensuring that potential stakeholders are aware of the opportunity to participate, that they can see some benefit or relevance to themselves, and feel confident about their capacity to participate. This requires publicising and advertising the proposed consultation as widely as possible, ensuring that participants have enough time to absorb all of the information required. Raising the awareness of people will be more successful if you start by considering the interests of stakeholders through community profiling – finding out their values, knowledge and experience with issue – and designing your advertising with these in mind.

The second aspect relates to broad issues when there is a need to raise general community awareness of the complexity and seriousness of the issues under consideration, both to inform and to broaden 'ownership' of the problem and, hence, the solutions.

The third aspect of awareness raising relates specifically to the provision of information. Effective consultation requires that people be given the opportunity to make *informed* decisions by providing them with accessible, relevant and comprehensive information about the issue, its impacts, and the consultation process. Establish a central point of contact to assist in information dissemination, answer questions and to serve as a visible and accessible conduit to expert information.

Schedule consultations locally to make them convenient, accessible and user-friendly for participants. Consider timeframes that do not conflict with work schedules, school holidays, dinner hours and other community commitments that may decrease attendance.

Advertise any events and proposed agendas in a timely manner in the print and electronic media, providing a phone number for community members to find out more information.



An example of awareness raising that occurred prior to a community involvement event can be found in the Dialogue with the City, a deliberative forum hosted by the Western Australian Department for Planning and Infrastructure. The 'Dialogue' process lasted for over 12 months and included a large scale community survey, a television broadcast about planning for Perth, an online discussion forum, a series of newspaper articles, a primary school drawing competition and a high school essay competition, learning sessions with young people and people from Indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds, culminating in a one-day public forum involving 1,100 citizens. Through this, participants were provided with background knowledge to inform their deliberation on the day.

See for further information *A Case Study in Deliberative Democracy: Dialogue with the City* (Hartz-Karp, undated)

5.4 Communicate Ideas Clearly

It is important to think about how to communicate effectively with the people identified.

Having an understanding of your stakeholders will allow for appropriately targeted communication strategies: In general:

- Use simple, clear and familiar language that is free of unnecessary jargon
- Provide a summary of the information
- Attract attention with clear, colourful illustrations
- Incorporate mechanisms to address differing levels of literacy in the community
- Use visual material
- Be responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community, including different language needs and the needs of the visually and hearing impaired
- Give clear contact details for feedback and identify an individual who is friendly and receptive to answer further questions or clarify points
- Check the understanding and provide further information if required.

5.5 Practicalities

The success of participation initiatives can be adversely affected if participants are not made to feel welcome and comfortable. Give consideration to their comfort when choosing the venue and amenities. For all activities scheduled it will be necessary to confirm all practical arrangements such as:

- Venue bookings, seating arrangements and room layout
- Audio/visual equipment and technical staff
- Agenda
- Presenters and notification of agenda
- Writing implements
- Refreshments and catering
- Parking availability
- Access needs

- Sufficient ratios between staff and audience numbers
- Note taking equipment
- Appropriate directional/information signs.

5.6 Providing Feedback

Feedback to participants should be provided at each stage of the participation process to validate information as it is gathered and to encourage continued involvement. This not only provides evidence that participants' views, comments and suggestions have been recorded accurately and taken seriously, contributing to the level of trust between all involved, but also enables people to hear other people's views.

End-of-process feedback should be provided soon after the analysis of input is completed to help ensure integrity and credibility. If delays occur, then provide interim updates on the process.

Feedback should acknowledge the contribution of both consultants and participants. In keeping with a policy of openness it may be beneficial to provide minutes of any deliberations, making note of both consensus and dissent. Confidentiality and privacy issues must be addressed at the outset.

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

Response to Recommendations

The agency conducting the consultation should respond to all views or recommendations put forward by participants. A response should address each recommendation and show whether it was accepted in whole or in part, or fully rejected. For each outcome, it is highly advisable that the reasons for the decision are made clear and made publicly available. The public also needs to be informed about how the outcomes will be implemented and who will be responsible for monitoring and review.

When advertising consultations in the *ConsultWA* consultations catalogue, it is possible to indicate whether a final report will be available and advise how it can be accessed.

5.7 Facilitation

A participatory process brings together diverse groups of stakeholders and uses a wide range of mechanisms. However, this does not necessarily produce desirable results. The various participatory mechanisms succeed only when properly organised, structured, focused and supported – in short, facilitated.

Effective facilitation is a key skill which underpins all successful community participation programs. Without effective facilitation consultation exercises are liable to become unfocussed and open-ended which will make them ineffective and devoid of substantive content. Effective consultations, on the other hand, will be well structured in relation to the objectives, clearly focussed, and will enable the constructive participation of all participants.

The role of the facilitator is to:

- Clarify the purpose of the consultation both in terms of outcomes (results) and in terms of process (what is gained from how it is done)
- Create an environment for constructive and cooperative interaction based on mutual respect and shared concerns
- Maximise the productivity of the group's work and participation.

While many agencies have staff skilled in facilitation it may sometimes be necessary to enlist the services of a skilled facilitator from outside the agency. An independent facilitator will be particularly useful for complex issues or where there is the potential for conflict between the various parties/stakeholders. An external facilitator should:

- Have no vested interest in the outcome of the process
- Be independent and considered neutral
- Be involved in the design of the engagement process

- If necessary, have experience in managing large public forums where there is potential for heated discussion and divergent viewpoints
- Have a good understanding of both the technical and administrative subject matter.

If an independent facilitator is contracted, it will be useful to do so early in the process so that they are familiar with the background issues and have an opportunity to provide input and advice in the planning stages. The facilitator should be thoroughly briefed on the background of the issues under review as well as the agency's risk assessment of the project. Involvement throughout the life of the project will also allow for relationships between facilitator and stakeholders to be ongoing.

It is important that agency staff work collaboratively with the facilitator to ensure that the history and in-depth knowledge gained through the consultation process is transferred to the agency and not lost once the contract ends. It will also ensure that there will be continuity in contact between the community and the agency and, thus, help maintain relationships built.

A useful resource for agencies in the area of facilitation is the *Facilitation Toolkit* (Keating 2003) available on the web site of the Department of Environment at <http://www.environment.wa.gov.au>.

5.8 Collaborative Approaches

The key challenge for government is a “need to break down the barriers of compartmentalised decision making by different authorities and groups”. [Petts 2000]

The Strategic Planning Framework for the Western Australian Public Sector, *Better Planning, Better Services*, articulates the Government's vision to meet the needs of current and future generations. It requires “Government agencies to operate collaboratively and cohesively and to engage with the Western Australian community”.

As the culture of participation begins to take hold across government departments and agencies, there will be an increased need for collaborative working across departmental boundaries to tackle shared issues. Collaboration between agencies can provide benefits in the form of:

- Reduced duplication
- Shared resources
- Sharing of knowledge
- Greater efficiency
- Reduced 'consultation fatigue'.

Developing an integrated approach to community participation initiatives will be aided by recording all consultation initiatives on the *ConsultWA* catalogue, which provides a central database of all Government department and agency calls for community input. This provides a resource not only for people wishing to investigate opportunities for participation, but also for agencies to learn about any significant consultations undertaken across Government.

5.9 Engaging Diverse Groups

“If you want to treat me equally, you may have to be prepared to treat me differently”. [Substantive Equality Unit 2004]

Multicultural Groups

Western Australia is populated by a diverse range of people from many different backgrounds with many different values and needs. The differences between people might be in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic background, values, physical and mental ability or tenure. To develop a community participation program that is inclusive of all Western Australians it may be necessary to shape engagement processes to better enable some communities and individuals to participate.

It is important that the tools and methods selected provide a range of opportunities to participate. Some commonly used methods can marginalise certain groups or sections of the community due to barriers such as language, literacy, disability and cultural issues.

To address these issues, choose a range of methods, combining questionnaires with reference groups, interviews and community meetings that are conducted taking into account community preferences and characteristics (such as age, gender etc.) and local circumstances.

In inviting the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse community groups do not assume that these groups are strictly homogenous as there will be widely varying cultural, socio-economic, educational and religious backgrounds. It will, therefore, be necessary to undertake research into the diversity of the community to design appropriate strategies for soliciting involvement. Familiarisation with the *WA Charter of Multiculturalism* (WA Government 2004b), the *Public Sector Anti-Racism and Equality Program* (Substantive Equality Unit 2004), and the *Policy Framework for Substantive Equality* (Substantive Equality Unit, undated) will assist.

Children and Young People

Another group that is often overlooked when agencies are embarking on a community participation program are children and young people. Children can, and do, provide unique insights into complex issues that challenge policy makers and this advice can improve the uptake of both child-centred policy and programs.

The Office for Children and Youth³ can provide advice on how to consult with children, and how to develop, implement, sustain and evaluate an advisory group comprised of children. Children can be involved in any decision that affects their lives, and in some cases, this is supported by government legislation, e.g. *Children and Community Services Act (2004)*.

³ Visit the Office for Children and Youth's website for more information at www.childrenandyoungth.wa.gov.au

People with Disabilities

The Disability Services Commission can provide assistance about the optimal ways of providing, accessing and receiving information using alternative formats. Publications are also available which provide guidelines for creating accessible events, writing in “Plain English” and “Best Practice – for document creation”. The Commission can also provide advice about methods of consultation and technical assistance with respect to appropriate research methodology (for example, surveys and questionnaires).

In general, look for innovative, evidence-based approaches for working with particular populations and consult with other agency staff and local organisations that also have regular contact with these communities.

Indigenous Groups

The Office of Citizens and Civics, in collaboration with the Department of Indigenous Affairs, has produced *Consulting Citizens: Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians* to guide government departments, non-government organisations and those employed in industry on how to improve the way they work with Aboriginal people. This guide is invaluable for any group designing a community participation plan, as it provides a framework by which non-Aboriginal groups can gain a greater knowledge and understanding of the cultural, linguistic and demographic diversity of Aboriginal Western Australia.

At the heart of this Guide, and essential for effective community participation, are a number of points that will help in designing a Community Participation Plan:

- Each community is different and unique
- Recognise and respect the protocol that an Aboriginal person cannot generally speak about, or for, another person’s land unless given permission by the traditional landowner
- Community members have the right to choose the time and place for a meeting

- In some settings, use of Aboriginal languages or interpreters may be required
- Follow-up after preliminary contact will be required as the request to consult may need to be put to other committees or members of the community
- Time must be allowed for discussion, for meetings to be planned and for organisation of meetings
- Time must be allowed for information to filter to other community members
- Keep an open mind in unfamiliar situations
- Be alert to the different ways people interact, within their communities and with others
- Make an effort to understand the particular protocols of culturally diverse groups
- Empathise with, and understand, those who have experienced great traumas in their lives
- Respect, and try to work with, the groups’ concepts of time, pace and priorities
- Be aware of how you and your role are perceived by the communities, and the possible impact this perception may have on the processes and outcomes of the consultation
- Start your approach by looking at the similarities that unite you and your target group as people, not just the differences that distinguish you from each other
- Be aware that gender roles and age dynamics may differ, and so you may need to organise separate consultative groups, (i.e. women only, or age group specific)
- Research the religious and cultural organisation of the target group, as you may need to organise discrete consultative groups within the one community according to faith
- Be willing to provide information and do so proactively
- Actively encourage and seek input from the group members

4 available online at http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au/0/54/48/Publications_.pm

- Be aware that some culturally diverse groups and communities may mistrust the motives of government representatives – but that is not necessarily a reflection on you; it may be the result of their prior experiences with the regimes and authorities in their places of origin
- Accept, difficult as it may be, that there are those who will not respond to consultation, outreach, or attempts at negotiation
- Watch out for “gatekeepers” – self-appointed guardians who claim to know what is best for their community
- Be willing to adapt and to learn
- Be consistent and reliable
- Effort must be made to provide on-the-spot feedback and follow up feedback
- A feedback and follow up process should be organised at the time of the consultation and decisions confirmed in writing
- An immediate answer to questions may not be forthcoming and consultations may not meet *your* expectations – don’t be disappointed or dismissive
- All agreements made at the meeting should be honoured and acted upon.

Further information for engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians can be obtained in the *Engaging with Aboriginal Western Australians* Guide which is available online at both the Department of Indigenous Affairs website and the *Citizenscape* website.⁵

Useful contacts include:

Equal Opportunity Commission / Substantive Equality Unit

Level 2, 141 St George's Terrace
Perth WA 6000
Telephone: (08) 9216 3909

Disability Services Commission

146-160 Colin Street
West Perth WA 6872
Telephone: (08) 9426 9200
Email: yourinfo@dsc.wa.gov.au

Department of Indigenous Affairs

Level 1, 197 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6000
Telephone: (08) 9235 8000
Email: info2@dia.wa.gov.au

Office of Multicultural Interests

Level 26/197 St Georges Terrace
Perth WA 6000
Telephone: (08) 9222 8800
Email: harmony@dpc.wa.gov.au

**Office for Children and Youth
Department of Community Development**

Level 7, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
West Perth WA 6005
Telephone: (08) 6217 8400
Email: youngpeople@dcd.wa.gov.au

5.10 Ethical Practice

The Public Sector Standards Commissioner has a general Code of Ethics that is based on the principles of justice, respect and responsible care. All consultations by State agencies must adhere to the Code of Ethics available online at: <http://www.wa.gov.au/opssc/publications/ethics.htm>. See also Appendix D for IAP2 Code of Ethics for Public Participation.

⁵ Department of Indigenous Affairs at <http://www.dia.wa.gov.au> and Citizenscape at <http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au>

5.11 e-Engagement

In recent years the development of information and communication technology (ICT) has seen an increase in the number of online public participation exercises. These include websites that provide information on various issues to others that request feedback or submissions. Internet technologies in particular offer a number of new ways to collect data and feedback from the community. Agency websites can provide:

- HTML survey or questionnaire
- Survey or questionnaire in Word or Adobe format that must be downloaded, printed out, then mailed back to agency
- Email address for general, non-structured submissions
- Postal address for general, non-structured submissions
- Contact telephone number for member of staff
- Announcement of in-person meeting or consultation.

The Office of Citizens and Civics, in cooperation with the Office of e-Government, has recently made available *e-Engagement: Guidelines For Effective Community Engagement Using Information and Communication Technology*⁶. This comprehensive guide covers in more detail issues pertinent to this particular form of consultation method and should be referred to if you are planning an online consultation.

Community participation can also be encouraged through the use of a number of ICT based participation strategies including:

- Online feedback or comments forms
- Real-time forums or chat rooms
- Public message boards
- Web-casting of meetings.

ICT has also been incorporated into more traditional methods of consultation. The use of computers has assisted in capturing participants' feedback and comments before relaying the data back to the assembled group.

Using ICT does not replace more traditional methods; rather it supplements the existing processes for community participation.

The principles for community participation as outlined in this Guide remain the same for e-engagement strategies. However, there are a number of additional considerations unique to ICT based exercises. These revolve around issues of authentication, privacy and adherence to relevant guiding legislation and regulations.

One of the main advantages of e-engagement is that it provides an opportunity for individuals to participate who would not usually be interested in the traditional methods of consultation, for example community meetings, longer workshops or large group meetings which can take days to complete. An e-engagement process can provide flexible options for input with participants being able to choose when and where to access the forum. Using ICT enables a quick response rate to concerns or issues and provides a medium by which information can be easily kept current and a large amount of data can be stored and collated.

Additionally, online services can remove many of the barriers that are experienced by people living in rural and remote communities (Maiolo 2004). Integrating online services with traditional face-to-face community consultation processes can enhance the opportunities for people in these areas. For example, video-conferencing technologies can allow more than 10 people in different locations to take part in discussions. The WA Telecentre Network⁷, under the umbrella of the Department of Local Government and Regional Development, provides video-conferencing facilities to over 100 communities in rural and remote areas.

⁶ download from Citizenscape Publications page at <http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au> or from the Office of e-Government at <http://www.egov.dpc.wa.gov.au>

⁷ see WA Telecentre Network at <http://www.telecentres.wa.gov.au> for further information

It must be emphasised, however, that relying solely on ICT to connect with remote and regional communities will assist only those that possess the technical infrastructure and the knowledge to use it. As such it will disadvantage those who have either no access to the technology, are hindered by unreliable connection speeds, or have not received sufficient training in the use of technologies. Undertaking a comprehensive “discovery” will reveal the issues facing communities, and armed with this knowledge, the project team will be able to design engagement opportunities suited to both the issue and the stakeholders.

5.12 Boards and Committees

Involving the public does not have to take place through one-off consultation activities but can also involve many different levels of government. Many agencies have established structures (e.g. boards and committees) through which members of the public can contribute on an on-going basis.

The Public Sector Management Division has published *Getting on Board: Guide to Recruitment and Induction of Members of Western Australian Government Boards and Committees*⁸. This publication provides information on all aspects of setting up and managing a board or committee, outlining the various types of boards and committees, the recruitment, selection and appointment process, and the duties and responsibilities of board members.

A register of people interested in nominating for appointments to Western Australian Government boards and committees is maintained by the Cabinet Services Branch of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Ministers and their staff have access to the register to identify prospective candidates.

Existing Boards and Committees can provide a valuable source of information during the discovery phase of your community participation planning.

It should be noted, however, that a board or committee does not replace the need to consult more widely, especially on major and complex issues.

⁸ available online at <http://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/psmd/pubs/exec/boards/contents.html>



6.0 managing significant or complex issues

managing significant or complex issues

On those projects that represent a significant investment for the State, where there is a high level of community interest, or where the issues for deliberation are highly complex or technical, it is important to gain a better understanding about risk factors and risk management.

6.1 Hazards and Outrage

Risk Assessment and Risk Management

The same risk assessment and risk management strategies should be applied to the public participation process as would be applied to any other project an organisation is undertaking. Badly conducted consultations or ill-conceived public participation exercises can be worse than not having engaged with the community at all. They contribute to public cynicism and jeopardise future government/citizen partnerships. On-the-other-hand, credible community participation processes provide one of the most effective mechanisms through which to build trust, gain respect, reduce risk, and ensure that decision-making is better aligned to “real” rather than perceived, community needs and expectations.

Risk management operates on two levels.

Risk at the project level

At the ‘project’ level, community engagement will form part of the risk management strategy. It is an opportunity to inform stakeholders and citizens of the complexities of the decisions to be made. However, consultation should not be seen as simply a forum for the transmission of purely technical information regarding risks or hazards - although this will certainly be one component of the exercise. There is also a non-technical or social side to risk management.

Peter Sandman (1986) defines risk as equal to the sum of the technical hazard posed by a situation and the outrage that the situation generates. That is, an individual’s assessment of the seriousness of the risk depends on his/her assessment of the ‘hazard’ (magnitude and probability) associated with the risk, and the ‘outrage’ that community expresses over the particular risk.

Risk = Hazard + Outrage

Sandman suggests that an expert’s assessment of risk generally coincides with the hazard posed by that risk while a citizen’s assessment is usually strongly affected by the outrage factors. What must be understood is that community views and perceptions are equally as valid as technical assessments. In providing their views, people want to be taken seriously. Just as technical experts expect trust and respect for their position so too do community members.

Understanding and anticipating community reaction to an issue will need to address concerns of trustworthiness, honesty, control, openness, responsiveness, fairness and respect⁹.

Community members and experts/specialists will often have very different views about the level of risk posed by a particular activity and these diverging views can lead to conflict. However, each view must be considered **equally valid**, and must be accommodated in the consultation itself. Sandman (see Holing 1996) believes that in any consultation you must accept that “emotions are legitimate – the public’s and your own”.

Risk at the process level

At the level of the public participation *process*, risk management is concerned with identifying and addressing potential risk factors associated with consultation. These risks, both technical and non-technical, can come from within or outside and organisation.

Some technical risks of consultation include:

- Low participation or response rates
- Poor quality responses
- Participants not representative of the community
- Cost and resource blow outs
- Confusion between participants and organisers about the purpose of the consultation
- Lack of consensus
- High dropout rate.

9 For more information see the work of Chess et al.(1988), Corvello (1992), Fischhoff et al. (1981), Sandman (1986)

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

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

Some social risks from outside an organisation include:

- Conflicting ideas from other departments or agencies
- Public perceptions of your commitment and capacity to listen and respond
- Issues of control.

Each of these risk factors should be identified in the planning stage and throughout the community participation program itself. It might be helpful to make these technical and social risks available to all participants to demonstrate a genuine desire to engage with the community.

The *Australian/New Zealand Risk Management Standard* (Standards Australia 1995) identifies four elements in the risk management process which can be applied to both technical and social risk factors.

1. Establish context – identify the issue, stakeholders, objectives and resources (time and budget)
2. Identify risks – what threatens the project and what threatens the consultation
3. Analyse and evaluate the risks – what is the likelihood and level of impact of the risk, which risks are acceptable and which require close monitoring, which risks can be avoided by implementing the plan
4. Treat risks – alter planning to reduce the likelihood of risks, develop alternative strategies or contingency strategies in the event that the risk factor emerges.

6.2 Barriers and Constraints

If only 10 people turn up to an advertised, public meeting or information session, it may be more than simple apathy that is keeping people away. People can be reluctant to become involved for a number of reasons. These reasons can represent the barriers to community participation. When planning a public participation exercise it is useful to develop a list of potential barriers to help work out ways of overcoming them before the process gets underway. Some barriers and possible considerations are:

- Communication – did you use appropriate methods to alert the affected community?
- Timing – is this convenient?
- Place – do people feel comfortable with and in the venue?
- Transport – is there accessible and timely public transport close to the consultation site?
- Child care responsibilities – should a crèche be arranged?
- Age – should children, young people, older people be met at schools, clubs etc, rather than expecting them to come to meetings?
- Formality and literacy – will people be put off by the style of meetings and expectation of high levels of literacy and confidence?
- Language – are all written reports in plain English and is there a need to make translations/translators available?
- Cultural issues – what cultural factors might be relevant to the timing and place of meetings?
- Access – is the building accessible to people with disabilities?
- Resources – should expenses be paid in some instances?
- Cynicism – how can trust be built and maintained?

6.3 Understanding the Potential for Problems

The website *Community Engagement in the NSW Planning System*¹⁰ lists the following problems that might be encountered during a public participation process and suggests that good planning will help to avoid these problems from becoming disasters.

- Self-interested or aggressive participants
- Participants with unrealistic expectations or inaccurate information
- Participants who dominate and don't allow others to speak
- Dealing with the 'usual suspects', active participants who may not be representative of the broader community
- Assessing the views of the silent majority
- Participants who digress from the issue
- Participants challenging the constraints of the process, i.e. wanting to have more influence on decision making
- Distrust/cynicism towards the consultation process
- Conflicting views within the community
- Continued opposition to a proposal
- Large numbers of responses
- Negative/inaccurate media coverage
- Demands for further consultation/extensions of timeframes
- Budget constraints that limit the scope of the community participation
- Technical equipment problems
- Inappropriate venue (size, location, climate)
- Participants unable to attend due to other commitments

If the nature of, and potential for, problems early in the planning stage is understood, it is possible to then design strategies for dealing with them should they arise.

6.4 Avoiding Consultation Fatigue

As government agencies begin to increase opportunities for community engagement there is the potential for what is commonly known as consultation fatigue. This is particularly the case for those community bodies, non-government organisations and peak groups who are most often approached for input. The general public do not appear to have reached this point and are willing to engage with agencies providing the subject is sufficiently relevant and they are approached in a professional and honest way.

It should be remembered that groups and individuals have a limited capacity for involvement. It is therefore vital that agencies take account of this when planning engagement strategies. To assist with this it is useful to:

- Bring stakeholders into the planning stages to help determine the form and methods of consultation and its timing
- Where possible, develop a program of consultation events 12 months ahead to give stakeholders sufficient time to schedule the events in
- Integrate consultation plans with other departments and agencies to avoid duplication and overlap
- Find easy ways for some groups to participate, for example through the use of ICT
- Invite groups with limited resources to identify those aspects upon which they wish to focus and help them channel their activity to fewer, more focussed actions
- Establish working groups that are able to devote the time to deliberate and devise solutions.

¹⁰ <http://www.iplan.nsw.gov.au/engagement/index.jsp>

6.5 Working with Advocacy and Lobby Groups

Many issues will result in the formation of highly organised, knowledgeable and politically connected groups that will have strong opinions on an issue and how it should be treated.

Traditionally, the 'loud voices' have been seen simply as trouble-makers intent on disrupting the process and opposing action. Their views are as valid as all other views and must be taken into account but, care should be taken to ensure that they do not dominate the participation process.

Some groups may claim to reflect the interests of the broader community and this should be clarified before the consultation begins. Ensure that *all* participants acknowledge that it is only through the participation of all community segments that balanced outcomes can be delivered.

If some groups are dominating the consultation process, seek to limit the opportunity for them to overly influence the outcome. This can be achieved by setting clear ground rules for groups to follow during the consultation and by breaking larger, dominating groups into smaller groups to ensure balanced contribution and, thus, influence.

6.6 Dealing with Anger and Aggressive Behaviours

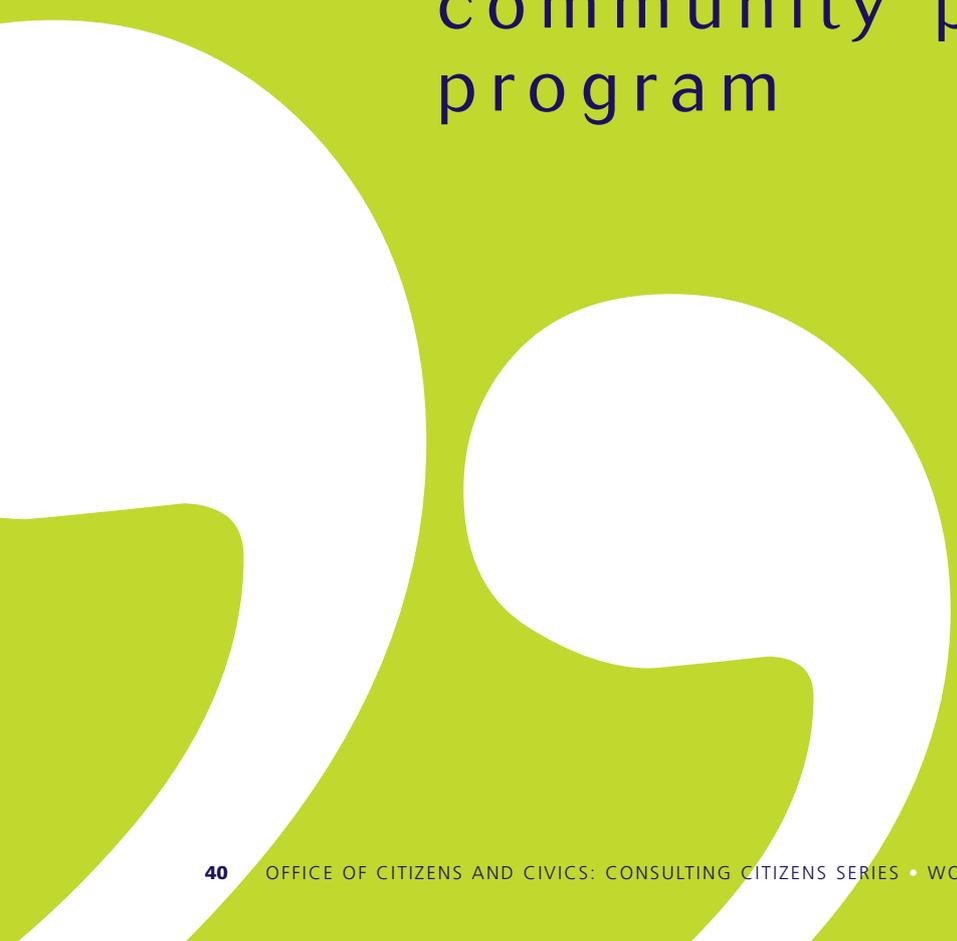
Consultation processes can often polarise opinions making it difficult to build good relationships between groups. The following discussion outlines some useful methods for dealing with aggressive behaviours and people with strongly held viewpoints.

Sandman's (1986) theory, *Risk = Hazard + Outrage*, offers an approach to reducing outrage. He recommends changing the outrage factors that can be changed, and acknowledging the existence and importance of outrage factors that cannot be changed. As part of the public participation program, the hazard can be made both more familiar and more knowable through informing citizens. If citizens are given more say in a fair and responsive decision-making process, then outrage can be lowered and aggressive behaviours dealt with more effectively.

When confronted with strongly held viewpoints or aggressive behaviours there are some specific actions that can be taken to help manage the situation. The first of these is self-management and then:

- Identify a common goal, as this is one way to unite the group
- Establish and maintain mechanisms to capture strongly held minority viewpoints
- Clarify expectations as to what the group can realistically expect to happen in the immediate future. Do not mislead, as this will create expectations that, if not met, will result in increased anger and a loss of credibility
- Get the group involved by listening. Give them plenty of time to express their feelings, which you can summarise and reflect on as a means to keep the anger at a manageable level
- Help the group problem solve. Identify what actions would help and what actions would make their situation worse
- Provide opportunity to follow up. Let the group know that resolution can take place only when there is a commitment by the parties involved. If the issue is unresolved, schedule a follow-up meeting and ask people to come to that meeting with more workable plans and less anger (Weisinger 1995).

Weisinger (1995) distinguishes between 'anger management' and 'conflict resolution' seeing anger as an emotion that can be managed through certain communication skills. Conflict is a situation in which one party's goals and perceptions are incompatible with, or in opposition to, those of another. Often, anger creates conflict. Managing anger can prevent conflict or it can create a situation in which it becomes easier to resolve conflict.



7.0

evaluating the
community participation
program

evaluating the community participation program

Effective evaluation is not an 'event' that occurs at the end of a project, but is an ongoing process which helps decision makers better understand the project; how it is impacting participants, partner agencies and the community; and how it is being influenced/impacted by both internal and external factors. (Kellog Foundation, undated)

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A commitment to genuine community participation entails a commitment to evaluation and flexibility in the process. While there are established mechanisms to measure economic and environmental aspects of a project, there are less available to evaluate social aspects. In the absence of consistent, measurable standards for determining good community participation, there will always be the potential for public suspicion and cynicism. Therefore, a sound and open evaluation process will alleviate these concerns.

Evaluation is directed towards assessing whether the program has had the desired effect; that is, whether it has achieved its objective. It is also forward looking because an evaluation will provide lessons for the future.

The Victorian Government has released Communication Evaluation Guidelines¹¹ stating the key principles guiding evaluation. These are equally applicable to community participation evaluations:

1. Evaluation involves assessment of the degree to which an activity's objectives have been met as a result of the activity. Evaluations are only as valuable as the objectives they are based on are appropriate
2. Evaluation is an integral part of all communications projects, including community participation programs, not an optional extra

3. Evaluation should be planned at the outset of a project, not left until the end
4. Evaluation must be properly budgeted for. As a rule of thumb, 10 per cent of a project's budget should be allocated to evaluation
5. A good test of the usefulness of an evaluation is to ask the following questions:
 - Does it successfully identify the *success/failure* of the project?
 - Does it effectively identify the reasons for the *success/failure* of the project?
 - Does it effectively identify the cost-effectiveness of the project?
 - Will it inform future practice?

Evaluation should occur at all stages of the community participation program – before, during and after. To focus evaluation, it is helpful to begin by answering the following key questions:

- What are you going to evaluate?
- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- Who will use the evaluation?
- How will they use the evaluation?
- What questions will the evaluations seek to answer?
- What indicators will I use?
- What evaluation method will I use?
- Who will carry out the evaluation?
- How will I report back to the community?

¹¹ Government of Victoria, Victorian Government Communication Evaluation Guidelines, available online at http://www.commstoolkit.dpc.vic.gov.au/downloads/R74_Evaluation_Guidelines.doc

7.1 Ongoing Process Evaluation

Ongoing process evaluation assesses the various components that make up the entire participation plan as they are being conducted.

Evaluation throughout the life of the community participation program will inform current ideas, approaches and negotiations. Ensuring a continual process will enable participants and organisers to review and reflect upon what they have achieved to date and determine whether changes are needed to the process or the content.

Process evaluation can ensure that 'interest driven' stakeholders focus on mutually beneficial solutions for the community rather than on specific agendas, which makes it very useful for highly controversial projects or where polarised views are held. Process evaluation can also be effective where a new understanding emerges between stakeholders, such as the redefinition of a problem, and shifts the basis of participation to a new level. More importantly, however, process evaluation will allow the participation processes to be reflective of, and responsive to events, input and decisions as they are happening. Process evaluation, therefore, provides ongoing feedback to the community participation project manager so that any 'mid-course corrections' can be undertaken in a timely manner.

In designing a community participation process, attention must be paid to the basic principles of quality assurance that will see the development and implementation of methods that are best suited for their intended use. Quality outcomes will require the selection of experienced staff, clarity on the issue, adequate process design and control, and in-process and end-of-process evaluation and reflection.

With careful design and evaluation, community participation planners can establish a high degree of confidence that the outcome will be acceptable to the community and to the organisation.

Because of the wide variety of public participation methods, tools and techniques and the diversity of issues under deliberation, it is not possible to provide a definitive process evaluation schedule that will be applicable to all. There are, however, several broad concepts that have general applicability and can provide a framework for process evaluation:

- **Discovery** - what research has been undertaken to gather knowledge of the history of the issue and how has this information contributed to the design of the consultation process?
- **Facilitation** - has a skilled facilitator been appointed and what is their level of independence from the organisation?
- **Transparency** - is each step in the process defined with sufficient clarity so that participants can understand what is required?
- **Representativeness** - do the number and type of participants reflect the size and diversity of the community?
- **Deliberation** - have the methods chosen allowed for adequate deliberation by participants?
- **Timeliness** - do all parties have sufficient time to familiarise themselves with the issue/participation process and were participants engaged early in the process?
- **Inclusiveness** - have strategies been put in place to ensure the involvement of all appropriate sections of the community?
- **Documentation** - have all aspects of the consultation been documented and are these available to interested parties (e.g. minutes of meetings, consultation outputs, decisions taken, etc)?
- **Influence** - how much influence and impact does the participants' input have on decisions?

Ongoing process evaluation is concerned with establishing the evidence that assures that the participation process is 'on track' to produce outcomes that reflect the objectives of the Community Participation Plan.

7.2 End of Program Evaluation

Regardless of the size or complexity of a public participation program, some measure of its success against well-defined criteria is necessary. Establishing what these criteria are will help both during the project and after it has been completed. Specific evaluation criteria should align closely with the objectives of the public participation exercise and with the principles of good practice.

An evaluation of the participation processes will identify the main problems encountered, whether the target group was reached, and the level of participant satisfaction. Evaluating the outcomes of the community participation program will help ascertain whether participants' input had an identifiable impact on the content of the final policy decision. Evaluation and results should be communicated widely and may, in turn, prompt fruitful debate on the benefits and difficulties in community participation.

Process and Products

An 'end of program' evaluation must assess both the *products* and the *process* of your public participation project. Evaluation of public participation programs is not simply a technical assessment of the products, but also considers the impact of the process itself on the participants.

An end of program evaluation of the **participation processes** will need to at least take account of the following:

- That the credibility, purpose and objectives of the public participation process were clear to all participants
- That stakeholders affected by the decision had an equal opportunity to participate and that a representative portion of them did so
- That the participation process was transparent
- That all communications were effective and inclusive, covering all necessary information
- That the participation process was adequately resourced in terms of staff, community and finances

- That the participation process achieved its objectives and stakeholders were satisfied with the results
- That the participation process contributed to the development of long-term relationships between all parties involved
- How effectively did it inform the decision-making?

Usually, the 'output' of a consultation exercise refers to the substantive decisions, conclusions, or recommendations made (e.g. built road, strategy written, etc). In brief, outputs are the 'what' that is being produced and are described in terms of what they are, not what they are for. These substantive outputs can be evaluated and compared using a variety of criteria, including quantity (the volume or unit of measure), cost effectiveness, quality (stakeholder satisfaction with the results), timeliness (delivery to deadline) or risk minimisation. Evaluation of these outputs is essential to ascertain agency performance.

However, narrowly interpreting the results of a participation program to refer only to substantive decisions misses some of the most important results. Evaluating the **outcomes** of a community participation program will assess the extent to which the program, and the wider project to which it relates, has achieved its original aims. It looks at the effects (or results, impacts) on the community and one way of measuring this is to consider the level to which participants are satisfied with the process.

Thus, a final evaluation will show:

- The resources required to conduct the participation program
- The activities undertaken to solicit community participation
- The participation rate, demographic, frequency, level of involvement
- The reactions towards the participation program including degree of interest, level of satisfaction
- The learning, knowledge, opinions and skills of participants that enabled their participation
- The actions taken following the participation program (outputs)

- The impact or benefits of the community participation program.

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

Evaluation Techniques

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

One of the more useful methodologies is one that has been developed for the Institute for Food Research (IFR) in the UK by Frewer, Rowe, Marsh and Reynolds (2001).

This approach uses three evaluation instruments – short and long questionnaires to be filled in by participants, and a checklist to be completed by all stakeholders (the consulting organisation, the participants and the public more generally) – based on the nine evaluation criteria.

These criteria “form the basis for the development of methodologies to assess the effectiveness of different public participation exercises” (see table below, and Appendix E for complete checklist).

The Evaluation Criteria of Rowe and Frewer (2000)

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

The criteria have been validated through a scientific survey process and have been tested on a number of participation processes in the United Kingdom and elsewhere¹². In using these criteria, community participation planners will be able to evaluate the key features of the program and identify areas for improvement.

¹² see for example, Cooper 2002

7.3 Reporting on the Community Participation Program

A Community Participation Outcome Report should be produced that summarises the processes undertaken and the outcomes achieved. This report will flow from the Community Participation Plan and include:

- The background to the program
- A history of the issue
- A list of the stakeholders and participants
- The purpose of the community participation program
- The processes used to enable community participation
- The content of the community participation program (i.e. how many people were involved, how many requests for information were received, the number of submissions received, a summary of comments and views received, other issues that were raised, etc)
- A discussion of the analysis of the outcomes of the consultation including any amendments, recommendations/proposals that have been made as a result
- Other outcomes from the program (e.g. plans for future community partnerships).

It is important for all who wish to have access to a record of the consultation's outcomes be given this opportunity. Availability of the raw data as well as any summary reports helps to build trust with the community and displays the commitment of the agency to transparency and accountability.

Having this information available also enables other agencies that may be planning community participation programs themselves to see what issues have already been consulted on and to gain a greater understanding of some of the additional issues that have been raised by participants. This serves a two-fold purpose – it will aid in combating 'consultation fatigue' where community members begin to feel over-consulted, and it will assist with discovery in future consultations.

summary

This guide amalgamates and updates the first two *Consulting Citizens* guides released in 2002 and 2003 respectively. It responds to the increasing uptake of community participation programs across government departments and agencies and their requests for advice on planning, designing and implementing successful and effective community consultations.

Departments and agencies in the Western Australian public sector are increasingly working with communities to define the scope of policy and planning issues that are the domain of the public.

This guide provides the framework for thinking about the most effective ways to, and the levels to which you can, involve the community. In adopting this framework agencies will be providing a consistent and transparent approach to including citizens in their policy making and project design.

If there is one key message that is crucial to the success or otherwise of a community participation initiative it is:

Involve the community early in the planning

There are many other crucial components and it is only through detailed and thorough planning that all of the components will come together for a successful, effective and rewarding program of community participation.



appendix A

OECD Guiding Principles for Engaging Citizens (OECD 2001)

1. Commitment

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

2. Rights

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

3. Clarity

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

4. Time

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

5. Objectivity

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

6. Resources

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

7. Co-ordination

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

8. Accountability

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

9. Evaluation

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

10. Active Citizenship

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

appendix B

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum (<http://www.iap2.org>)



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

(Source: IAP2 2000)

appendix C

Community Engagement Tools

METHODS AND MODELS	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
Advisory Committees and Boards	Community representatives are recruited to provide public input into planning and policy making. It is important to develop appropriate selection criteria, define roles and responsibilities up front, and allow for the transmission of information from the committee to the wider community.	Provides for detailed analyses for project issues Committee members gain understanding of other perspectives, leading toward compromise	General public may not embrace committee's recommendations Members may not achieve consensus Time and labour intensive
Charrette	Typically intense, meetings between agencies, stakeholders and community representatives. A charrette promotes joint ownership of the solution and attempts to defuse traditional confrontation by working on options put forward by all participants. It will require community agreement that 'something should be done'.	Relatively cost-effective Can utilise ICT to present and capture information Allows for joint ownership of the outcomes	Timeframe may prevent participants from fully understanding the process or the issue
Citizen Advisory Committees	A small group of participants that are representative of various groups or communities, are convened to examine an issue. They converse with agency representatives and others over extended periods of time. They may monitor the progress of a project and inform the community of new information that comes to light. This process is longer-term than public meetings or workshops and is thought to encourage more extensive interaction.	Represents a highly visible means of demonstrating commitment to community input Provides a forum for people with differing levels of expertise and opinions to inform each other Informs public, aids trust in government, and reduces conflict	Not representative group Requires high level of commitment from committee members Requires adequate resources
Citizen Juries	A group of 12 to 24, roughly representative of the population, is randomly selected to meet over several days as part of a jury. The lay panel question expert witnesses, mediated by a facilitator. Juries are not open to public although conclusions are published in a report. The objective is to reach a decision or formulate a set of recommendations. Commissioning body must follow recommendations or explain why they have not. Be clear about how results will be used. Consensus not required.	Opportunity to develop deep understanding of an issue Provides informed feedback Public can identify with representative citizens Useful when advocacy groups want to take role of "expert", do not want to compromise and participate in framing solution	Resource intensive Not suitable for all issues Extensive preparatory work required Small group size makes Representativeness difficult
Citizens' Panels	Comprise between 500 and 2500 citizens who are representative of population. Used as sounding board to test, assess and develop proposals over an extended period of time. Panel members need to be made clear of their roles. Can be conducted in partnership with other connected organisations/agencies.	Track views over time Can be directed towards particular targets Access to wide range including minority groups	Resource intensive in initial stages Maintaining interest for panel members Replacing members throughout process

METHODS AND MODELS	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
Community Workshops	A facilitated workshop is an intensive session or working meeting attended by seven to 50 stakeholders with different fields of expertise. The facilitator aids the groups' discussion and information sharing. An analyst may use decision-aiding technology to model the groups' views. The main points of the discussion are recorded. Workshops are usually focused on a very specific set of issues to enable in-depth discussion.	Allows for in-depth deliberation and discussion of complex issues Can establish common ground among participants from which new ideas can be developed Provides opportunity to bring marginalised people and others together to generate ideas	Can be resource intensive to establish
Consensus Conference	A group 10 to 16 participants, that are in some way selected to be representative of the general population, are brought together with experts in a range of fields relevant to the topic being discussed. The experts, who may have conflicting views, inform participants about the topic and field questions. The discussion is facilitated by an independent party. Participants then discuss the case and come to some consensus. The meetings are open for observation to the wider public, experts, and media, and results of deliberation are published.	Panel determine questions to ask witnesses leading to greater impartiality Open to public – transparent Provides informed deliberation	High level commitment from panel Time and cost intensive Extensive preparatory work Not representative May be difficulty in reaching a consensus
Deliberative Opinion Polls	Uses statistically significant sample to measure informed opinion on an issue during a 2-3 day meeting. Participants will not necessarily develop a shared view and the process will require a skilled facilitator.	Polling of an informed group Exposure to different backgrounds, arguments and views	Resource intensive Can be costly to setup and pay expenses of those attending Not representative
e-engagement	Using information technology as a means to inform and gather feedback (eg calls for submissions, completing online questionnaires etc). Online discussion forums, chat rooms and e-polling technologies and web questionnaires may be combined in more general e-consultation procedures to explore what people are thinking.	Cost effective after initial outlay Quick response rate Easy to keep information current Can incorporate large amount of data	Will not reach everyone Technical problems Requires expert staff Can yield unbalanced view
Face-to-Face Interviews	Face-to-face interviews are the traditional way of asking large numbers of people their views based upon a structured questionnaire. Trained interviewers either stop respondents in the street, or visit them in their homes, to find out what people think about services and issues.	Provides opportunities to get understanding of public concerns and issues Provides opportunity to learn how to best communicate with public	Scheduling multiple interviews can be time consuming Interviewers must engender trust or risk negative response to format Not necessarily representative
Focus Groups	Eight to 10 people led by trained facilitator in one-off discussion on particular topic. Selection of group is of primary importance. Focus groups are chosen according to specific criteria, e.g. age, gender, service-user. Individuals are usually strategically invited to attend the 'informal' discussion to talk about a particular issue following a pre-defined agenda. May need to have several groups to investigate views from different perspectives.	Allows for brainstorming of ideas Can include those who may usually be excluded Allows in-depth discussion	May be costly Lack of confidentiality Qualitative information only Difficulty in prioritising issues

METHODS AND MODELS	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES	POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES
Future Search Conference	Conducted at the beginning of the planning process to develop a vision for the future. These are highly structured events usually lasting 2-3 days. People representing the widest possible range of interests are brought together in one room. The ideal number is considered to be 64 since this breaks down into 8 groups of 8.	Makes use of the skills and knowledge of a small group of people. Allows an exchange of information Many viewpoints can be heard	Resource intensive Can be captured by large interest groups Difficulty in reaching a consensus Can raise expectations if required 'authority' has not been sought
Open Days/Community Exhibitions	These provide a forum to inform the public about a particular situation. There is a two-way exchange of information although there is more emphasis on experts making presentations than the public asking questions and putting their opinions forward. The community have little influence on the final outcome. The number of participants is restricted to the size of the venue. The results of the enquiry may be published.	Gives public flexibility to attend Allows contact with public and can provide ad-hoc feedback Promotes agency	Feedback may be limited and may not be representative Difficulty in recording responses
Open Public Meetings	Formal meeting with scheduled agenda at an accessible and convenient public location.	Opportunity to provide information and obtain feedback Demonstrates commitment to public consultation Builds relationships with local community Relatively inexpensive	Not representative Localised knowledge only Large group format may be a barrier to some
Public Submissions	Inviting public submissions for written comments on specific proposals. Provide full details of issue for which views are sought. Publicise activity. May need multiple format for documents and must allow ample time to respond.	Provides detailed information on the issue for those interested Extracts considered view	Resource intensive May have poor response rate Lengthy process
Small Neighbourhood Meetings	Small meetings within neighbourhood usually at a person's home. Make sure staff are very polite and appreciative. May need to be aware of other neighbourhood issues and ensure the issue is relevant to neighbourhood.	Relaxed setting is conducive to effective dialogue. Maximises two-way communication	Requires a lot of labour to reach many people
Staff Feedback and Suggestions	Encourage feedback and suggestions from frontline staff who deal with the public. Train staff to deal with comments and complaints. Establish systems for obtaining feedback.	Shows you value staff and are open to suggestions Valuable source of information on service use and users	Relies on staff effort Time consuming Does not necessarily provide representative views
Surveys and Questionnaires	Quantitative research in the form of questionnaires or surveys gives statistics in response to set questions. Can be administered through post, via telephone or face-to-face. Development of the questions should be undertaken by a professional to avoid bias. Most suitable for general attitudinal surveys.	Provides input from individuals who would be unlikely to attend meetings Provides input from cross-section of community Statistically tested results are more persuasive with political bodies and the general public	Response rate is generally low For statistically valid results, can be labour intensive and expensive It is difficult to establish why someone has answered a certain way
Complaints	Make feedback forms accessible. Encourage feedback from users.	Provides input from those using the services Easy to set up Provides information about service's weaknesses and strengths	Not representative Essentially reactive to existing systems

appendix D

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Code of Ethics

available online at <http://www.iap2.org>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

appendix E

Evaluation Criteria and Guidelines for the Effective Conduct of a Participation Exercise (Frewer et al 2001)

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

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

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

glossary

Best Practice	A way or method of accomplishing a business function or process that is considered to be superior to all other known methods
Citizen	Membership in a political community which carries with it rights to political participation
Collaboration	A process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can explore constructively their differences and search for (and implement) solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible
Community	A group of people who live and interact based on economic transactions, social relationships and environmental interdependence within a specific geographic region
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) protects the environment, particularly matters of National Environmental Significance. It streamlines national environmental assessment and approvals process, protects Australian biodiversity and integrates management of important natural and cultural places. The EPBC Act came into force on 17 July 2000
Facilitation	A collaborative process in which a neutral party seeks to assist a group of individuals or other parties to discuss constructively a number of complex, potentially controversial issues
ICT	Information and Communications Technology - such as radio and the newer digital technologies like computers, satellite, mobile phones and the Internet
Impact	A change in the status (eg, health, standard of living) of individuals, families, or communities as a result of a program, project, or activity
Joined Up	(Usually Government) A trend toward 'networked', integrated or cross agency approaches to solving intractable problems
Mediation	The intervention of an acceptable third party who has limited or no authoritative decision-making power but who assists the involved parties in voluntarily reaching a mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute
Objective	A focus and overall framework or purpose for a project or other endeavour, which may be further defined by one or more goals
Outcome	Results of a process, including outputs, effects, and impacts
Output	The direct result of the interaction of inputs and processes in the system; the types and quantities of goods and services produced by an activity, project, or program
Partnership	A relationship in which organisations and groups share resources and responsibility to achieve a common objective, as well as any resulting rewards or recognition
Plan	A proposed or intended method of getting from one set of circumstances to another
Process	A generalizable method of doing something, generally involving steps or operations that are usually ordered and/or interdependent
Program	Generally defined as an organized set of activities directed toward a common purpose or goal, undertaken or proposed by an agency in order to carry out its responsibilities
Project	A structure to complete a specified defined deliverable or set of deliverables. A project has a specific begin date and end date, specific objectives and specific resources assigned to perform the work
Social Capital	The degree to which a community or society collaborates and cooperates (through such mechanisms as networks, shared trust, norms and values) to achieve mutual benefits
Stakeholder	Any person, group or organisation with an interest or 'stake' in an issue either because they will be affected by a decision or may have some influence on its outcome

resources

Reference List

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