

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUE

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INTRODUCTION

There are basically two categories of Public Involvement techniques: face-to-face, and at-a-distance. Face-to-face techniques are usually more expensive, work better with smaller groups, and are oriented toward achieving specific results. At-a-distance techniques are usually less expensive, can work with very large groups, and may be intended to convey more general information. This protocol will help you select from the wide range of techniques in each category those which will best enable you to accomplish your Public Involvement goals for a particular project.

Face-to-Face Techniques

Face-to-face techniques, generally speaking, consist of meetings, show-me trips, and various kinds of committees. Within this category, however, lies a multitude of specific formats, each with its own features and applications.

Public Involvement Technique

| Technique | Features | Applications |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass meeting • Workshop • Hearing • Forum • Charette • Town meeting • Open house • Briefing • Professional conference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-to-many or many-to-many • with or without a facilitator • formal or informal • relatively expensive • complex planning process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agenda and outcomes • location, logistics • transcript or minutes • participants invited • large- or small-group formats • usually a one-time event • can create a legal record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sharing opinions or facts • reaching consensus • exploring options • establishing credibility • airing differences of opinion • learning from each other • presenting technical data • satisfies the “auditory” types |
| <p>Show-me Trips</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often complex logistics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often the best way to get |

| Technique | Features | Applications |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visits • Observation decks • Comparison trips • Restricted open houses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timing may be crucial • relatively expensive • usually for smaller groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> data • satisfies the “show me” types • establishes openness • essential to resolve some issues • satisfies the “visual” types |
| <p>Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working group • Focus group • Advisory committee • Watchdog committee • “Blue Ribbon Panel” • Negotiation group • Task force | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requires time commitment • usually a many-time event • usually for smaller groups • requires minutes or transcript • may result in a report • requires careful outcome plans • FACA compliance needed • can create a legal record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates buy-in from members • creates long-term relationship • problem-solving format • sharing technical information • establishes credibility • get outside expertise / opinion • provides objectivity • satisfies the “kinesthetic” types |
| <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview • Ombudsman • Door-to-door canvassing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highly tailored to needs • usually one-on-one • can be expensive • require follow-through | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essential in some situations • gathers detailed information • resolves problems objectively • establishes responsiveness |

At-a-Distance Techniques

These techniques depend on some form of mass media, either print or electronic. They can be interactive or not, one-time or continuous, technical or image-oriented. This category contains myriad possibilities; it is important to remember to use them effectively.

| Technique | Features | Applications |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Print Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper articles • Newspaper advertisements • Legal notices • Magazine articles • Newsletters • Handbills • Press releases • Press conferences • Fact sheets • Briefing books • Technical reports / studies • Library / data repository • Exhibits • Posters • Bulletin board displays • Written surveys with responses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reach many people / groups • short (or long) lead time • can be done in-house • relatively inexpensive • must be well-designed • can carefully select words • can use clear / bright graphics • can be simple or complex • can be used over and over again • can create a legal record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensures consistent messages • reaches many people / groups • gets written feedback • sends information out • conveys technical details • corroborates oral information • satisfies the “visual” types |
| <p>Electronic Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone contacts • Telephone trees / networks • Telephone conferences • Hot line / 800 number • Television appearances • Television news reports | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can operate in real-time • more vivid than print media • coaching often necessary • technologically sophisticated • may not reach all publics • require careful planning • cost-benefit analysis needed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convey timely information • reach those who don’t read • convey “sound bites” quickly • shape opinions • create images • support other channels |

| Technique | Features | Applications |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Televised press conferences • Video-conferencing • Radio appearances • Radio news reports • Radio advertisements • Public service announcements • Podcasts • Advertising on TV or radio • CD-ROM or interactive disks • List serves • Internet postings of documents • Chat rooms • Blogs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two-way traditional media (TV, radio) very expensive • focus is on “sound bites” for traditional electronic media • New (Internet) technology requires ongoing updating and maintenance • Internet not accessible to everyone • Slow connections prevent downloading large documents • Can broadcast direct to peoples’ cell phones • Blogs create dialogue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfy V, A, K, depending • Interaction possible • Spread a lot of information quickly • Connect younger users • Link to more information |