Empowering the Public

CSS 385
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"Homework" Assignment #1

• You’ve just returned from the perfect public meeting. People showed up with very contentious viewpoints but everything worked out beyond all your expectations.

• Please write what were some of the things that happened that made this such a great meeting?
“Homework” Assignment #2

• You’ve all probably been involved at least once or twice in an absolutely horrible public meeting.

• Please write down what made that meeting so horrible—what went wrong?

Barriers to Public Participation

• “Why don’t more people get involved, especially when issues affect them & the consequences of bad decisions are long-term & severe?”

Training & Self-preservation!
Society is trained to be contentious

- Shock Radio
- TV “Reality” shows
- News shows – argumentative, over-talking
- Political campaigns that turn mean-spirited
- “He who shouts loudest & belittles his opponents, wins!”
- Public hearings often set poor examples
- “You didn’t listen last time we spoke up!”

Barriers to Public Participation

- Input too late in decision process
- Contentious, rude, domineering behavior
- Narrow representation
- Inconvenient time & place
- Single mode (i.e., only a survey, workshop...)
- “Public hearings are the most ineffective means of public participation.”
Empowering Citizens

Empowering citizens means designing processes:

• where citizens know that their participation has the potential to have an impact,
• where a range of representative citizens are included, and feel heard
• and where there are visible outcomes.

Authentic Participation

• Involve participants early in process
• Clearly define how input will be used
• Set & follow realistic timelines
• Obtain participation of Administrators
• Provide education & technical expertise
• Facilitate feedback to constituents
Use Transactive or Collaborative Process

- Small groups
- Face-to-face dialogue
- Mutual learning
- A series of small transactions and compromises will lead to big decisions.
- Mutual understanding & support will result.

Typical Next Steps

- Develop criteria to judge options
- Provide constant lines of feedback to constituency groups all along the way
- Discuss alternatives of non-compliance (...do they really want another lawsuit?)
- Agree among group to monitor the outcomes
- Shared decisions are 100% more likely to be implemented
A Method for Small Group Rotations

1st Rotation – groups spend 25 min. discussing and writing key suggestions on topic of primary interest

Designed to take advantage of people’s expertise, share ideas, & inform everyone.

2nd Rotation – groups go to next topic & spend 15 min. to review, add or amend their comments
Small Group Rotations

3rd Rotation – groups spend 10 min. to review & amend or clarify all comments
Small Group Rotations

Here’s the logic. People spend more time at their first station. It takes less time at subsequent stations because most ideas have already emerged. However, everyone gets exposed to all ideas!

How to Prioritize?

- Never rank more than 7 items
- Select 1\textsuperscript{st} then 7\textsuperscript{th}, Select 2\textsuperscript{nd} then 6\textsuperscript{th} . . .
- Use dots, but specify rules . . .
- Individuals or small groups select just top 3, then share
- Discuss logic of final ranking
- Use a criteria matrix
### Criteria Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th># Served</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle Trail</td>
<td>e.g. “High”</td>
<td>“Low”</td>
<td>“Short”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic grounds</td>
<td>“Medium”</td>
<td>“Low”</td>
<td>“Short”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming Pool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey Rink</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball diamonds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rifle Range</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score each item on each criteria

Go back & weight each criteria

Discuss logic of final ranking

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### Selecting Participants

- Include those with veto power
- Include those who have authority to represent their group.
- Allow interest groups to choose their own representatives.
- Select people willing to listen, negotiate, compromise & communicate.
- Select a group that is well balanced.
- Limit the size of the group.
- Ensure the diversity of interests affected are included.
Include the Right People

- Diversity
- Veto power
- Good listeners
- Good communicators
- Good negotiators
- Good compromisers
- Good representatives

Members should agree to:

- Represent & report to their constituency.
- Work as a team.
- Give people a chance to speak.
- Focus on ideas & issues, not on people or their personalities.
- Speak **concisely & listen without interrupting**.
- Work towards consensus.
- Discuss & resolve problems within the group.
- Other?
What else can go wrong?

- Turnover / absences / dropout
- Delays & cancellations
- Lack of progress
- Turnover of leadership
- Emergence of new issues