MODULE

5

Community Engagement and Communication

The Health Planner's Toolkit

Health System Intelligence Project – 2006

Ontario

Table of Contents

About HSIP

Health System Intelligence Project (HSIP)

The Health Planning Toolkit is produced by the Health System Intelligence Project. HSIP consists of a team of health system experts retained by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Health Results Team for Information Management (HRT-IM) to provide the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) with:

- Sophisticated data analysis
- Interpretation of results
- Orientation of new staff to health system data analysis issues
- Training on new techniques and technologies pertaining to health system analysis and planning.

The Health Results Team for Information Management created the Health System Intelligence Project to complement and augment the existing analytical and planning capacity within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The project team is working in concert with Ministry analysts to ensure that the LHINs are provided with analytic supports they need for their local health system planning activities.

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Who Do We Talk To? – The Planner's Challenge

Christophe is a LHIN planner. He has been asked to take part in a joint project involving the LHIN, local municipalities and social service agencies to engage people concerned about neurological disorders in the development of an enhanced and coordinated system of services and supports to people with neurological impairments. An initial look at the issue convinces Christophe that any understanding of this complex phenomenon cannot be derived from his planning textbooks and experiences alone. The engagement of a number of stakeholder groups will be necessary as a way to understand the issues of neurological impairment and to strengthen the responses of communities to people with neurological impairments and their families.

Christophe also knows that community engagement requires extensive ongoing communication with and from the communities and individuals who will be part of the engagement.

"We make our friends; we make our enemies; but God makes our next-door neighbour. Hence he comes to us clad in all the careless terrors of nature; he is as strange as the stars, as reckless and indifferent as the rain. He is Man, the most terrible of the beasts. That is why the old religions and the old scriptural language showed so sharp a wisdom when they spoke, not of one's duty towards humanity, but one's duty towards one's neighbour."

– G.K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, 1905

This Module's Purpose

This module is meant to acquaint its readers with the why and the how of community engagement. It provides definitions, theories and frameworks that lie behind community engagement, it provides examples of the manageable tensions within community engagement, and it describes basic community engagement tools. It also describes the ten steps in conducting a community engagement process:

1. defining the engagement's provisional purpose
2. creating a project strategy/plan, including a statement of principles to guide the engagement, and a communication plan
3. deciding which communities to engage
4. deciding what tools to use to engage communities
5. obtaining the resources necessary to act as the project's secretariat and resource pool
6. engaging communities using the selected tools
7. monitoring the engagement process and making adjustments to the process based on the results of the evaluation
8. sharing the results with all participants and decision-makers
9. assisting decision-makers in understanding the process, the participants and the results
10. evaluating and monitoring implementation of the results.

While this module is about community engagement, it does not venture into the sister field of community development – a vastly rich field in and of itself that deserves treatment separately so it is not given short shrift.

This module also addresses the purposes and methods of communication since communication is both the glue and the oil that allow community engagement processes to hold together and to minimize friction. Bad communication obfuscates and breeds division. Good communication enlightens and builds trust – and both light and trust are essential to any community engagement process.

Section 1

The Why and the What of Community Engagement

Defining community engagement rests on the definition of its two constituent terms:

- community, and
- engagement.

Both terms are explored in the following sections of this module. But before examining these sections, the reader would benefit from knowing that a range of terms – all very similar in meaning – are commonly used to describe community engagement. This range includes **community consultation, stakeholder engagement, stakeholder involvement** and **stakeholder consultation**.

> "The role of the Government is changing. The community is seeking better government leadership through increased public participation in decision-making. This allows government to tap new sources of ideas, information and resources when making decisions. Equally important, it contributes to building public trust in government, raising the quality of democracy and strengthening civic capacity."
>
> – *Community Engagement Division Directions Statement, Queensland Government, 2001*

1.1 Why Community Engagement?

Health related government departments, and other officially mandated organizations such as LHINs, are busy enough as it is – hence the question *"Why bother with community engagement?"* is a valid one. There are three simple answers to this question:

1. Citizens increasingly expect to be engaged in decisions that affect them.
2. The work of governments and official agencies is more acceptable to citizens if community engagement processes have been part of the overall official decision-making process.

3. Community engagement can uncover and support strengths in communities that can be added to the strength of government and official agencies in solving societal problems.

A more complex answer also makes sense. Community engagement can serve eleven valid purposes and two invalid ones. The valid purposes, individually or in combination, can warrant the creation of a community engagement process:

1. to convey and explain information to a community
2. to seek community feedback on information
3. to elicit information from a community
4. to engage community talent and skill in helping solve a problem that otherwise would not be solved
5. to elicit community support for an initiative
6. to engage a community in a planning process
7. to negotiate with a community
8. to elicit community involvement in the monitoring or evaluation of a health activity, program or system
9. to elicit and/or support ongoing community involvement in the operation of a health activity, program or system (as board members, advisory committee members, volunteers or as potential or actual employees)
10. to provide a community with tools that will help it foster wellbeing among its members (including wellbeing defined as a heightened sense of community among its members)
11. to respond to an issue that the community has defined, and on which it wants dialogue.

These eleven purposes are not sealed off from each other. For instance, negotiating with a community may be an aim in and of itself but it may also be a tool used in achieving other aims (to elicit community support for an initiative for example).

However, two invalid reasons for community engagement serve as a warning to those exploring and evaluating the community engagement field. Community engagement is invalid if it seeks to;

- create a venue for those in power to misinform a community, or
- fulfill an explicit or implicit obligation to engage a community, with the intention of creating the appearance of – but not the substance of – engagement.

1.2 When Should Community Engagement be Used?

Community engagement is useful when a sponsoring organization;

- cannot meet a social good without the active engagement of others so they can provide knowledge, wisdom, debate, consensus or ongoing active support and resources,
- and has the capacity to act, or to cause others to act, on the basis of the ideas and consensus that emerge from the community engagement process.

"Active engagement" is not the same as asking others for a report or a statistic. It relies on the need for opinion, belief, experience and wisdom from others.

Community engagement is not necessary if a sponsoring organization only wants to carry out a dialogue with similar organizations-with-power. For instance, five branches of the Ministry of Health may meet over an extended period of time to harmonize their policy bases. This may be excellent inter-departmental coordination, but it is not the same as community engagement. What accounts for the difference is the concept of **community** – a concept described more fully in the next sections of this module.

Community engagement should also not be used when public relations will suffice. If all a sponsoring organization wants to do is inform and influence others, it can do so in far less active ways than community engagement. In community engagement, people drawn from communities do more than hear about desirable outcomes; they play a role in shaping those outcomes.

1.3 What is a Community?

Understanding what the word **community** means is important, but any definition of community must be taken with a grain of salt.

> "Community is a problem term if it is used as a blanket description for 'all those other people'. There are many communities, defined by, for example, people's shared interests, locality, age or gender. The 'community' which participates will depend on the project or programme because different people are interested in different issues."
>
> – David Wilcox, *The Guide to Effective Participation*

Understanding the concept of community and its variations helps determine what kind of community should be engaged both in changing things and in preserving what is worth preserving.

But there is no universally accepted definition of community, and real-life people belong to many communities at the same time. They seldom reflect the perspectives of a single community, even when asked to talk about or engage in activities related to a specific community. For instance, a person from the "community" of Pefferlaw may also belong to a faith community, a workplace community, an ethnocultural community and a dozen other communities – by asking her to participate only as a member of the community of Pefferlaw is to deny her the richness of her experience in, and perspectives drawn from many communities. How she responds to a request for opinion or involvement may yield the perspective of a Buddhist nurse of Vietnamese heritage working in a community care setting – who also lives in Pefferlaw.

A few definitions (chosen from thousands of definitions) show the diversity of the term "community":

"A community is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it."

Robert Bellah et al. *Habits of the Heart.*

"A community is a group of two or more people who have been able to accept and transcend their differences regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds (social, spiritual, educational, ethnic, economic, political, etc.).This enables them to communicate effectively and openly and to work together toward goals identified as being for their common good."

Foundation for Community Encouragement

"A community is a relatively self-sufficient population, residing in a limited geographic area, bound together by feelings of unity and interdependency."

Bryon Munon, *Changing Community Dimensions*

"A community is a group of people lined by a communications structure supporting discussion and collective action."

C. Farrington and E. Pine, *Community Memory: A Case Study in Community Communication*

"Community is best defined as a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds."

Thomas Bender. *Community and Social Change in America*

"A body of people organized into a political, municipal, or social unity."

one of eleven definitions found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*

"A real community need not consist of people who are perpetually together; but it must consist of people, who precisely because they are comrades, have mutual access to one another and are ready for one another."

Martin Buber, *Paths to Utopia*

"The sociological term community should be understood here as meaning (1) a group of people (2) who share social interaction (3) and some common ties between themselves and the other members of the group (4) and who share an area for at least some of the time."

Robin Hamman. *Introduction to Virtual Communities Research,* Cybersociology Magazine Issue Two

Rather than arriving at a single definition from this welter of separate definitions, this module suggests that for practical purposes five kinds of communities can be identified:

1. Geographical communities

These are communities in the most commonly understood sense of people living in proximity to each other, be it a village, a rural area, a city or a megalopolis.

2. Communities of interest

These are communities whose members share common interests – a political or social cause for instance, or a hobby.

3. Communities of common characteristics

Members of these communities exhibit common characteristics such as age, gender and language.

4. Communities of common experience

These are communities whose members share common life experiences. Former prisoners, cancer patients or graduates of yeshivas or parochial schools can be said to belong to communities of common experience.

5. Communities of shared belief

These are communities whose members have a shared belief system. Marxists, practicing Presbyterians and believers in UFOs can all be said to be members of three separate communities of shared belief.

The following points are worth considering in terms of these varying definitions of communities:

- The various kinds of communities are often interwoven. For instance, most people living in the Aboriginal community of Pikangikum may also be members of the same communities of common characteristics, common interests and common experience.

- Several of the community types outlined above may not always be defined by the degree of social interaction among the community's members. They may in fact not think of themselves as members of the same community. For instance, a group of people of various ages and ethnocultural backgrounds who have all been hospitalized in different places for treatment of bipolar disorder may not perceive their commonality to any appreciable degree.

Example:

A LHIN planner wants to engage people in Sudbury in helping design a comprehensive cancer system for the city and its environs. Should she involve people from Sudbury, regardless of any personal shared experience they may have had with cancer? Perhaps she needs to engage four communities:

- Sudburians who have been treated for cancer (a community of common experience)
- Sudburians at risk of cancer (a community of common characteristics)
- family members of people in Sudbury who have experienced cancer treatment (a community of common experience)
- health workers in cancer treatment settings in Sudbury (a community of common experience – and possibly a community of shared beliefs as well).

She may engage these communities separately, together or both. For instance, she may learn that family members are likely to be reticent in the presence of health professionals so she may engage them separately at first, and later – when they have developed a confident common sense of community – engage them in dialogue with health professionals.

However, including these groups as communities may be important because one branch of community engagement (described later in this module) involves uncovering the incipient or latent sense of community within a group of people who might not otherwise see their commonalities. In short, they may be latent communities that would benefit from becoming actual communities.

Why do these sub-definitions matter? **Because anyone involved in fostering community engagement will do a better job of it if she knows what communities she should engage in the change process.**

1.4 Community Strengths and Deficits

It is easy to over-romanticize the concept of community. While a community can be a source of great strength to its members, it can also impede its members' achievement of personal goals by subordinating personal achievement and satisfaction to community achievement and satisfaction. A community can be welcoming, empowering, nurturing, pluralistic, egalitarian and creative. It can also be excluding, disempowering, censorious, alienating, stultifyingly rigid, hierarchical and intolerant of dissidence and change.

> "It is fitting for you to maintain a good brotherhood. It is right for you to have a good disposition. Good is the land and the patrimony you inhabit; plenteous her harvest, her honey, her fish, her wheat, and her other grain. Moderate her heat and her cold. All that is sufficient for you is in her."
>
> the Celtic *Book of Invasions (Leabhar Gabhála)*, 12th century AD

On the other hand, it is equally easy to see communities as collections of deficits and failures, in need of external experts to help them overcome their flaws.

It is not the job of a planner, a community engagement expert or a system manager to judge communities. It is, however, the job of these "outsiders" to work with communities and their members to explore and understand both the strengths and deficits of communities.

1.5 Intra-Community and Inter-Community Diversity

One of the most persistent questions related to community engagement is: who speaks for a community? The question is rooted in the knowledge that few communities are monolithic, with a single mind and a single voice. **Almost any community is defined as much by its diversity as by its commonality**. Failure to take this into account is tantamount to failure at community engagement.

Most health issues requiring community engagement affect more than one community. Accordingly, engaging "the community" often involves engaging multiple communities with differing perspectives. Uncovering consensus across communities and helping build consensus across communities is a legitimate aim of community engagement – but assuming consensus is there without seeking evidence of consensus is simplistic.

Example:

A LHIN staffer is responsible for engaging survivors of major health problems to gain a better understanding of post-acute health needs. Among the members of this survivors' group are people who survived cancer and others who survived cocaine addiction. The LHIN staffer assumes both sets of survivors are a single "survivor community" and does not foster exploration of their different perspectives. In fact they see themselves as separate communities vying for resources for members of their communities.

However, there is another crucial reason for engaging multiple communities. Often the problem under examination cannot be adequately addressed if it draws on the insights of only one community.

In short, two paradigms for multi-community engagement can be considered: the fairness/inclusion paradigm; and the multiple contributor paradigm.

The two paradigms are not mutually exclusive, and communities that are most likely to be affected by an engagement process may be communities that can best contribute to a better understanding of, and better decisions about, the issue under consideration.

However, applying both paradigms can help ensure that both need and capacity are factored into decisions about who to involve in community engagement processes.

Table 1: Paradigms for Multi-Community Engagement

The paradigm	The rationale underlying the paradigm
1. The fairness/inclusion paradigm	The prime indicator is whether the community will be unfairly disadvantaged if it is excluded or will be fairly advantaged if it is included.
2. The multiple contributor paradigm	The prime indicator is whether the community can contribute to a better understanding of, and better decisions about, the issue under consideration.

Example:

In East Brooklyn New York in the early 1980s, a multi-church group called East Brooklyn Churches mobilized around the issue of poor housing in the community.

Their work took a major step forward through the involvement of a well-known *New York Daily News* columnist and former developer, I. D. Robbins. East Brooklyn Churches adopted Robbins' controversial argument that for half the cost of high-density, high-rise apartments it would be possible to build large numbers of single family-owned homes that could create stable neighborhoods. They struck on the idea of constructing low-cost homes on tracts of abandoned land in East Brooklyn. The churches, in league with Robbins, persuaded New York City to donate land for construction, using church funds, of what came to be called "Nehemiah Project" houses. The Nehemiah Project proved so successful that it has been replicated throughout the US and was introduced into the UK as well.

Using only the "fairness/inclusion" paradigm, I. D. Robbins would not have been involved. But using the "multiple contributor" paradigm, his perspectives could be engaged – and contributed greatly to the birth and success of Project Nehemiah.

1.6 The Democratic Disposition

A multiplicity of communities, each containing its own diversity, doesn't sound like a recipe for mutual engagement. What is needed before this engagement can take place successfully is an ingredient beyond the full control of any engagement process – an ingredient that political scientist Jean Bethke Elshtain calls the **democratic dispositions**, a term she defines as:

"a preparedness to work with others different from oneself toward shared ends; a combination of strong convictions with a readiness to compromise in the recognition that one can't always get everything one wants; and a sense of individuality and a commitment to civic goods that are not the possession of one person or one small group alone".[1]

> "A nation can be maintained only if, between the state and the individual, there is interposed a whole series of secondary groups near enough to the individuals to attract them strongly in their sphere of action and drag them, in this way, into the general torment of civil life."
>
> Emile Durkheim

A community without democratic dispositions could take part in a process with the purpose of raising only its own voice, without change or compromise, and in opposition to other voices, as an appeal to someone in authority. But while a community engagement process cannot always control the dispositions as "input" to the process, it can sometimes develop democratic dispositions as process or outcome features of engagement.

Put another way, civic community advocates such as Belshtain and the sociologists Robert Putnam and Robert Bellah sometimes speak of the difference between **vertical** voices and **horizontal** voices:

- **Vertical** voices are voices from the relatively disempowered, directed at powerful listeners. These are voices asking for favours, for something it is not within the power of the favour-seeker to provide by himself.

- **Horizontal** voices are equal-to-equal voices, raised to share experiences and ideas and to find common ground. Even disadvantaged communities can speak horizontally to other disempowered communities and can find strength in their commonalities.

But horizontal voices are more than words in air. They are also tools for creating **horizontal networks** of people – networks that can take a common approach in terms of appealing to authority or that can collectively deal with problems whose solutions would otherwise require supplication to authority. Module 4 of this toolkit (Integration) describes such networks as one useful way of achieving integration in the health field.

Any engagement process can likely only make modest gains in fostering horizontal voices and networks, but these gains are often worthwhile if the alternative is nothing but perpetuation of individual voices speaking vertically to authority and power. In short, the process can foster democratic dispositions.

1.7 Service Providers as Communities

Much of community engagement literature focuses on involvement of vulnerable, disenfranchised or alienated populations. However, service providers are also formed into communities (some powerful, some weak) that are likely to be communities of common experience and communities of common belief. Involving these communities in multi-community engagement is crucial, since they have unique perspectives to share and their buy-in often makes the difference between a plan on paper and a plan actualized.

But there is great diversity across these communities. Some comprise powerful providers (physicians and agency administrators for instance) who are adept at assertively putting ideas forward in the languages of both politics and bureaucracy (this is not a criticism – it is a statement of an edge they have within public discourse). Others are less powerful, more numerous, less adept at debate in the public forum, and more prone to defer in public settings to the pronouncements of powerful groups.

Power differences are often most evident when comparing consumers or vulnerable populations with "professional" or more advantaged populations. But coping with power differences among provider communities must also be taken into account. Later this module will suggest ways to deal with power differences among those involved in multi-community engagement.

1.8 What is Engagement?

Four definitions of engagement, all of them specific to communities and to the health environment, illustrate key features of the concept:

"Community Engagement encompasses a wide variety of activities from consultations with the public to community development and community capacity building. The goal of Community Engagement is to develop and enhance public participation in health service planning and decision-making, and raise awareness within the health system about community issues and concerns that may not otherwise be apparent."

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority definition

Engagement is "the active involvement of people in any decisions that may affect the health of them, their families and the communities they are linked to... [Engagement] assumes community engagement will aim to give equal status to lay people in decision making and take seriously lay knowledge and expertise."

Community engagement for health: A preliminary review of training and development needs and existing provision for public sector organizations and their workers. National Collaborating Centre for Community Engagement, Lancaster University

"Citizen engagement is a process that:

- Involves citizens, not just the public as represented by associations, health professionals, lobbyists and interest groups, in policy formulation, priority setting and program delivery

- Is a key component of 'governance,' namely the process and traditions that determine how a society steers itself and how citizens are accorded a voice on issues of public concern, and how decisions are made on these issues

- Builds on, complements and generally moves beyond information distribution and consultation practices. It does not replace 'traditional' consultation with stakeholder organizations, nor does it replace citizens' role in the broader democratic process. Its purpose is to provide new opportunities to bring interested parties together as civic-minded individuals concerned about health issues."

The Health Canada Policy Toolkit for Public Involvement in Decision Making

"Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people."

Centers for Disease Control/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Committee for Community Engagement

These four definitions each emphasize key features of engagement:

- The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority definition points out that community engagement comprises *"a wide variety of activities from consultations with the public to community development and community capacity building."*
- The definition used by the National Collaborating Centre for Community Engagement points out that community engagement involves a better balance of power by giving *"equal status to lay people in decision making."*
- The definition used by Health Canada states that public involvement "does not replace 'traditional' consultation with stakeholder organizations, nor does it replace citizens' role in the broader democratic process."
- The definition used by the Centers for Disease Control/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry points to the importance of joint activity between formal systems and communities, because it involves *"working collaboratively with and through groups of people…"*

In short, these four definitions demonstrate a triad of desirable traits:

Figure 1: Desirable Traits of Engagement

Involves working collaboratively

Involves a better balance of power between experts and communities

Promotes collaboration between experts and communities
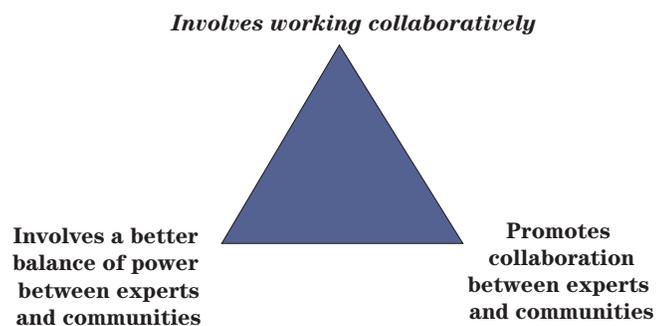
Within these three definitions, several specific ends are identified:

- *"to develop and enhance public participation in health service planning and decision-making"*
- *"to raise awareness within the health system about community issues and concerns that may not otherwise be apparent"*
- *"to give equal status to lay people in decision-making"*
- *"to take seriously lay knowledge and expertise"*
- *"to address issues affecting the well-being of… people"*
- *"to provide new opportunities to bring interested parties together as civic-minded individuals concerned about health issues"*.

None of these ends refers specifically to what most people would consider the most important outcome: increased health for people in communities – and research continues to try to find the connection, and the causative links if any, between community engagement and improved health outcomes.

However, many proponents of community engagement argue in favour of community engagement for two other reasons, independent of improved health:

- **The appeal to values:** This argument posits that engagement of communities is an important social value in and of itself (much akin to the argument that democracy is better than any other form of government simply because it is a paramount value).
- **The appeal to political feasibility:** This argument posits that engagement of communities is valuable because it allows decision makers (often in the political and public service spheres) to gauge what degree of resistance to, or support for, various courses of action are likely to occur. This allows decision-makers to make decisions that are least likely to be politically disruptive (and therefore most likely to be implemented successfully).

Section 2

Varieties of Community Engagement

As the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority points out, community engagement comprises *"a wide variety of activities from consultations with the public to community development and community capacity building."*

This variety includes the variety of tools and activities used in community engagement – but it also involves variety in how community engagement is envisaged, and variety in envisaging the different levels of community engagement. The following sections outline several perspectives on the elements of community engagement.

2.1 Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Over the years a number of typologies have been put forward to describe the range or levels of engagement that can fall under the term "community engagement". The best known of these is Sherry Arnstein's **ladder of citizen participation,** put forward in 1969.[2] The

typology contains eight types of citizen participation, corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product. But Arnstein goes further by assigning a value or worth to clusters of rungs on the ladder – some rungs are considered more valid than others on the climb toward ideal citizen participation. Arnstein's typology has been criticized for its emphasis solely on power (and some criticisms are cited below), but because of the influence Arnstein's ladder has had on the development of engagement, it is worth first of all presenting it as Arnstein presented it.

Arnstein's typology was developed in the late 1960s during the height of "people power" and reflected circumstances within the U.S. urban development field at the time. Since then many critics have addressed shortcomings in Arnstein's approach.

Most notably, Arnstein's argument that the transfer of formal power is the only true measure of the value of citizen participation has been criticized:

Figure 2: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation
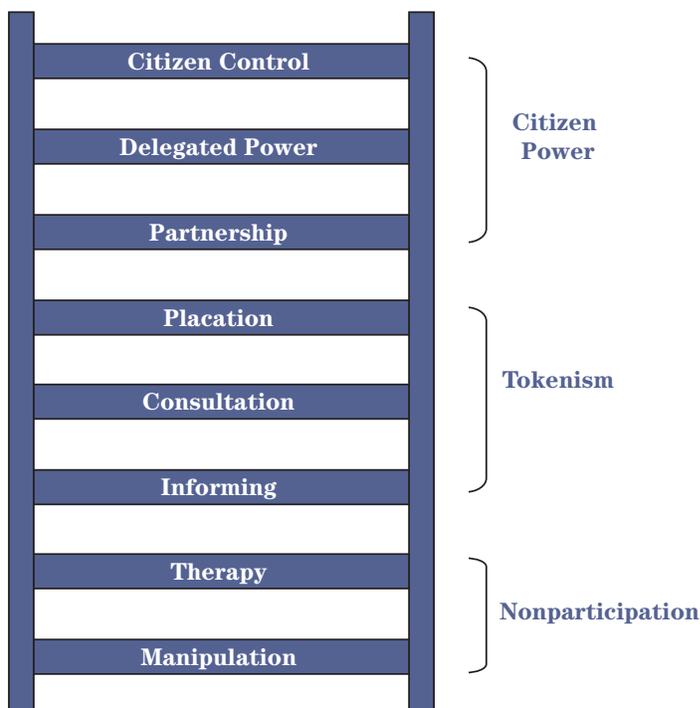
"For 35 years, Arnstein has been central to developing our thinking on the engagement between individuals and public sector elites. The world has changed and the policy concerns and conflicts that shape contemporary health environments are different. Policy makers need to be aware that applying Arnstein's model closes off options. Just as an overemphasis on ensuring statistical representativeness in user involvement blocks attempts to begin to involve users, Arnstein's emphasis on the transfer of power assumes that power has a common basis for users and providers (or policy makers). Such an approach limits the potential for sharing experience, knowledge and the harnessing of multiple perspectives inherent in successful user involvement."[3]

This critique makes sense within the context of LHINs in Ontario. Even if a LHIN considered it advisable to delegate formal power or to foster formal citizen control, it is not currently within the power or mandate of LHINs to do so. LHINs are empowered by the legislation that created them, and formal divestment of their power would likely be an abrogation of their responsibility and accountability under legislation and under their accountability agreements with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

However, Arnstein's ladder still provides useful concepts concerning gradations of citizen participation:

- It points to a number of options for participation short of actual transfer of power (even though it does not consider many of these options to be as valid as formal transfer of power). It therefore leaves much room for creativity on the part of LHINs.
- It points out that at the lower rungs of the ladders, efforts at fostering so-called participation as either manipulation or therapy may be dishonest or damaging.

2.2 The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Typology

A more contemporary Canadian health-focused typology, adapted from the World Health Organization, was developed by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority – a typology without the sharp edges of Arnstein's typology.[4]

Figure 3: The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Typology

- **Empower** — Community identifies issues, solutions, actions – system supports
- **Inform** — Community receives information and announcements
- **Collaborate** — Community shares decision-making; system defines limitations
- **Consult** — Community is consulted on final plans
- **Involve** — System gets advice on planning; feedback may change plan

Two features of this model distinguish it from the Arnstein ladder:

1. Its components are not arranged in a hierarchical manner. Each component is valid under the right circumstances, and no component is merely a way station on the road to another component.
2. The model assigns no innate value to any one component; no component is inherently better than any other component.

2.3 The Health Canada Typology

Another contemporary Canadian typology is Health Canada's Public Involvement Continuum,[5] which is used by Health Canada's branches to guide their public involvement activities.

Like the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority typology, the Health Canada approach cites five "points of intensity" on the engagement continuum. The Health Canada typology expresses the points in terms of the nature of communication and influence among participants.

Figure 4: The Health Canada Typology

| Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Level 4 | Level 5 |

Low level of public involvement and influence ← → Mid level of public involvement and influence ← → High level of public involvement and influence

Inform or Educate **Gather Information** **Discuss** **Engage** **Partner**

Communications →

← Listening →

← Consulting →

← Engaging →

← Partnering
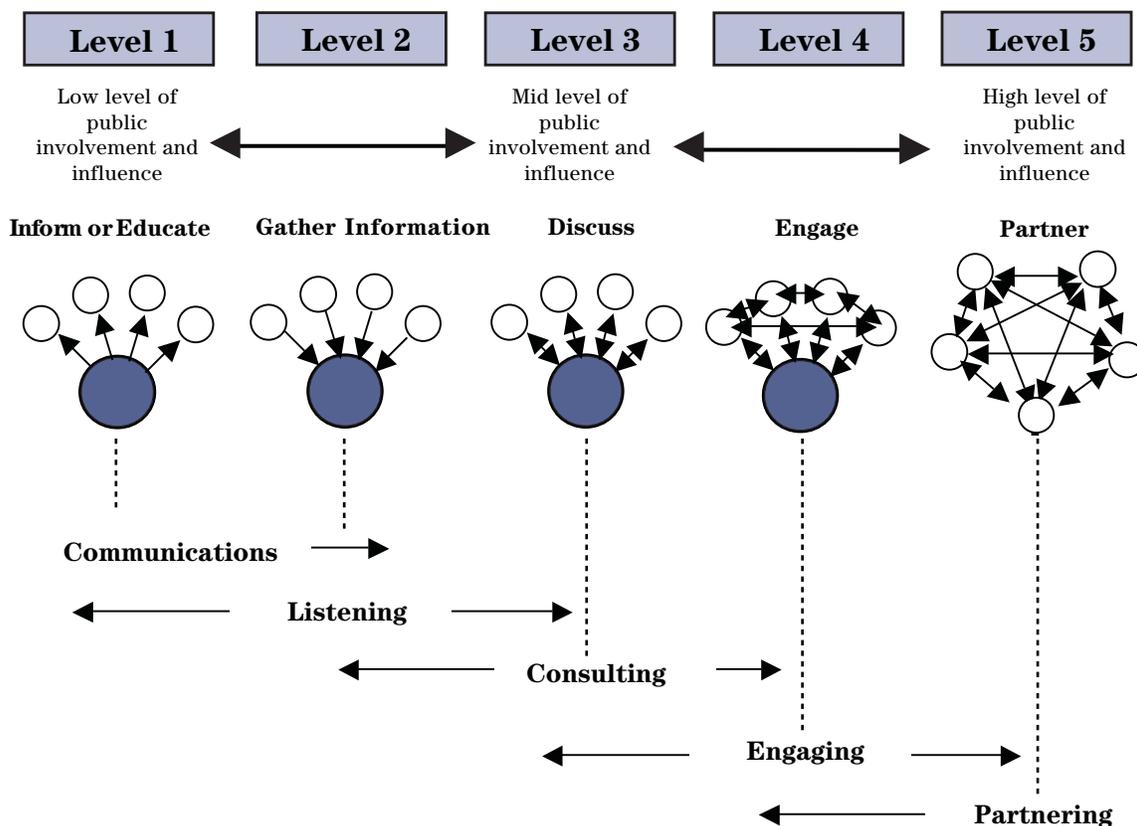
2.4 Length, Breadth and Depth in Community Engagement

Another way to look at community engagement is to examine three dimensions that chracterize a community engagement process:

1. **The length of the engagement:** How long will communities be involved in the engagement?

2. **The breadth of engagement:** How broadly will the community or communities be engaged – just a few people and communities, or many people and communities?

3. **The depth of engagement:** Will communities be engaged only in a shallow way – occasional consultation for example – or in more profound ways such as partnership?

Before initiating a community engagement process, its sponsors should be aware that once the engagement has begun, community participants will develop their own expectations about how long, broad and deep the engagement should be. These expectations may differ from the expectations of the sponsor – and a process of "expectation negotiation" may be necessary to ensure that;

- some, if not all, community participant expectations are met, and

- some, if not all, sponsor expectations are met.

Figure 5: Length, Breadth and Depth in Community Engagement
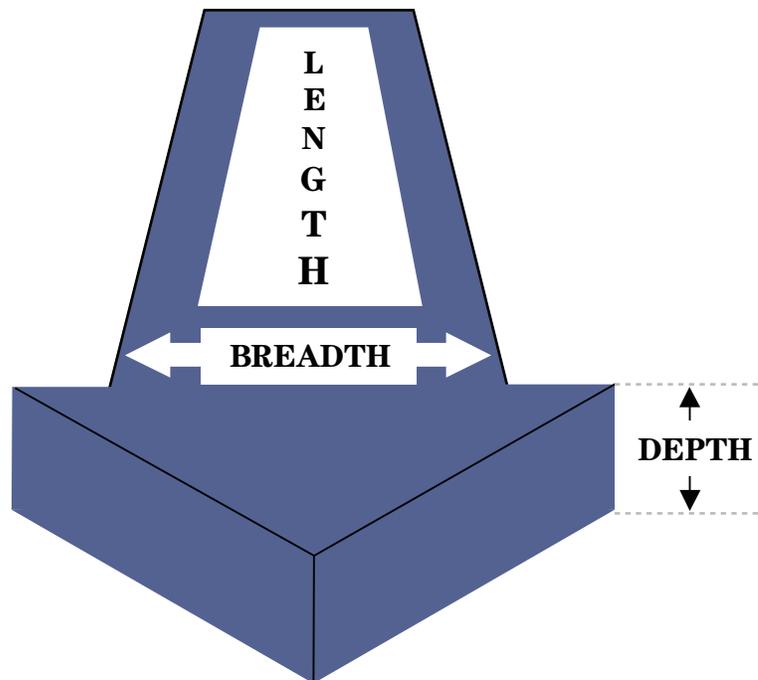
2.5 Principles of Community Engagement

A number of jurisdictions that have adopted community engagement strategies have developed principles to guide engagement. Examples from four jurisdictions are cited in Appendix B to illustrate the range of principles that drive engagement.

The principles generally form themselves into four key clusters, shown below.

Table 2: Community Engagement Principles

Principles Of Effectiveness

- Engage early enough to make a difference.

- Resource it properly.

- Be prepared to pay attention to the results.

- Monitor and evaluate its effectiveness.

Principles Of Inclusion

- Build in ethnocultural diversity.

- Eliminate physical, psychological and socioeconomic barriers to participation by all groups.

Principles Of Clarity

- Be transparent in terms of purpose and communication.

- Be transparent about how results will be used.

- Develop a clear but flexible project strategy.

Principles Of Respect

- Be the community's partner, not its master.

- Use tools acceptable to the participants.

- Hear what people say, not what you want to hear.

- Create realistic timelines.

Steps Within Community Engagement

The principles outlined in the previous section, as well as the Arnstein, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, Health Canada and length/depth/breadth typologies, lead to a number of key steps within community engagement. These steps are shown graphically below.

What follows are some key issues surrounding a number of the steps outlined below.

Figure 6: Community Engagement Steps

GETTING IT DONE

1. Define the engagement's provisional purpose.

2. Create a project strategy/plan, including a statement of principles to guide the engagement, and a communication plan.

3. Decide which communities to engage.

4. Decide what tools to use to engage communities.

5. Obtain the resources necessary to act as the project's secretariat and resource pool.

6. Engage communities using the selected tools.

7. Monitor the engagement process and make adjustments to the process based on the results of the evaluation.

8. Share the results with all participants and decision-makers.

9. Assist decision-makers in understanding the process, the participants and the results.

10. Evaluate, and monitor implementation of the results.

communicate regularly and clearly with all participants

GETTING IT DONE RIGHT

At the beginning, the project will be "owned" by its initiators. As communities become engaged they should develop co-ownership of the process ("you" becomes "us").

These steps are described as if they are linear. In reality, be prepared to revisit steps to ensure they are rooted in the consensus of the engaged communities.

Engaged communities may want to stay engaged as advocates for their work. If your role prevents you from being an advocate, do not put roadblocks in their ability to advocate.

3.1 Define the Purpose

An organization sponsoring a community engagement strategy must know **why** it wants to sponsor it. Section 1 of this module outlined eleven legitimate purposes for community engagement. Knowing which of these a project serves is crucial.

Creating the Purpose

An organization wishing to identify a purpose that community engagement might serve (if the community has not already identified the purpose) can do so in two ways:

1. **By directly deciding on a purpose without consultation with the communities to be involved in the engagement.** Sometimes this "solo" approach is necessary because the organization has a compelling need to solve a problem or address an issue or opportunity, and this need will clearly drive the purpose of engagement. However, an inflexible statement of purpose can alienate potential community participants.

2. **By negotiating the purpose with the community**. This may be essential in some instances; since the community's investment of time and creativity in the engagement process is often crucial, the community will not make and sustain this investment unless it agrees with the purpose or has a chance to add complementary purposes of its own. However, negotiating purposes can be tricky. Generally, defining the purpose precedes defining the communities to be involved in achieving the purpose – but unless one can identify the communities to be engaged, it is not possible to negotiate with the communities to establish the purposes.

Dealing with this complexity often involves preliminary discussions with people drawn from the community to identify a clear – but **provisional** – set of purposes, to be refined and made clear once the communities have become more fully engaged.

Eleven Purposes of Community Engagement:

1. to convey and explain information to a community

2. to seek community feedback on information

3. to elicit information from a community

4. to engage community talent and skill in helping solve a problem that otherwise would not be solved

5. to elicit community support for an initiative

6. to engage a community in a planning process

7. to negotiate with a community

8. to elicit community involvement in the monitoring or evaluation of a health activity, program or system

9. to elicit and/or support ongoing community involvement in the operation of a health activity, program or system (as board members, advisory committee members, volunteers or as potential or actual employees)

10. to provide a community with tools that will help it foster wellbeing among its members

11. to respond to an issue that the community has defined, and on which it wants dialogue.

Allowing Purposes to Emerge

Clarity of purpose does not mean rigidity of purpose. Once an engagement process has begun, participants may see new purposes that can be served by the engagement process. For instance, a process of community engagement in planning may yield the conclusion that the process can also serve to provide a community with tools that will help it foster wellbeing among its members. If this conclusion emerges it should be examined by engaged participants to determine what adjustments, if any, need to be made so that the engagement process can also serve the newly emerging purpose.

> "Since change in dynamically complex circumstances is non-linear, we cannot predict or guide the process with any precision: Change is a journey, not a blueprint."
>
> Michael Fullan, *Change Forces*

During an engagement process, it is helpful to revisit the statement of purpose occasionally to see if it is still valid, to determine if "purpose drift" or "scope creep" has occurred, and to make adjustments if drift or creep have taken place – keeping in mind that drift and creep many not be bad. These phenomena may reflect greater participant understanding of potential gains from the process. Accordingly, the response to drift and creep may not be "going back to basics" but may involve redefining the basics.

3.2 Create a Project Strategy and Plan

Although community engagement is open to surprises and unexpected turns, development of a strategy and a plan for a community engagement process are crucial first steps that can help minimize surprises:

- The strategy identifies the broad thrust of the project, moving from its purpose to its projected outcome.
- The plan identifies how the strategy will be put into operation.

The plan should also include a description of how the project's process and outcomes will be evaluated. This allows information to be collected during the project, and at its end, to allow evaluation to take place.

3.3 Identify Communities to be Engaged

For some community engagement processes, communities will self-identify as participants (for instance, when the aim is to respond to an issue the community has defined and on which it wants dialogue). For other processes, community identification will be more difficult. Identifying communities is closely tied to the question **"Who is a stakeholder?"** and is similarly tied to the question **"What is the purpose of this engagement strategy?"**

One simple definition of a stakeholder is **"Any group or individual who can affect or who is affected by achievement of (or failure to achieve) an objective."**

This definition casts a wide net. But identifying participant communities is also closely tied to the question: **"What resources are available for this engagement initiative?"** Given infinite resources, an engagement initiative could engage (or try to engage) everybody. But resources are finite, and criteria often need to be developed to guide decisions on who should be involved.

Some of the criteria (phrased as questions) that can be taken into account are:

- Whose health and wellbeing will be most improved if the aim of this engagement is achieved?
- Whose health and wellbeing will be most damaged if the aim of this engagement is not achieved?
- Who has unique skills or insights to offer to the engagement that cannot be garnered in any other way?
- Who can exert power to make initiatives happen that spring from this initiative?
- Who is most likely to be responsible for actually delivering any services or initiatives that spring from this initiative?
- Who is most likely to act as "spoiler" if they are not involved in this initiative?
- Whose voice is needed to balance competing or contrary voices?

The last question is knotty because it addresses the politics of engagement. Representatives of some communities may advocate for inclusion in an engagement initiative because they see the initiative as largely competitive; they feel that if their voices are not heard, another voice with a different point of view will be heard and heeded. This occurs in highly contentious areas such as family planning or distribution of scarce resources across a multitude of different potential recipients of funding.

A community that sees little benefit in being cooperatively (rather than competitively) involved in an engagement process should not automatically be ruled out of participation in the process. After all, the process itself may convince such stakeholders that the process will be better if it becomes cooperative rather than competitive. But when such a stakeholder group is included, it may be wise to include the "opposite voice" as well.

The following criterion is almost never valid for deciding who should be involved: **"Who is most able to use traditional bureaucratic ways of transacting business?"** Applying this criterion can lead to the elimination of communities based not on their needs, but on the convenience of organizers. If a group is important enough to include based on some other criterion, the engagement process must find ways include them.

The Scottish Executive has published best practice guidance on consultations with "equalities groups", found at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/46729/0025644.pdf.

Example:

A number of years ago, Ontario's associations for community living (organizations serving people with developmental disabilities) began to involve people with developmental disabilities (often described as "self advocates") on their boards. At the time, some individuals both within and beyond the field were skeptical about the capacity of people with developmental disabilities to serve on boards, or claimed that people with disabilities would require such specialized attention to serve successfully that they would inconvenience the organizations on whose boards they served and would slow down the governance process.

However, many associations believed it was a matter of principle to engage people with developmental disabilities as board members, and they put in place provisions to help support self advocates on boards. As a result, Ontario is now a leader in engaging service users on the boards of agencies serving people with developmental disabilities.

Understanding Consultation Skepticism
An increasingly common reaction to invitations to participate is skepticism on the part of those who are offered a seat at the table (sometimes called "consultation fatigue", a phrase that implies the problem lies within the invitee, not within the process).

Sometimes an engagement project's sponsor reacts to this skepticism by assuming the roots of skepticism lie in a failure by the would-be participant to understand the virtue of the engagement process. The skepticism is seen as an aberration on the part of the potential participant that will be corrected once the participant understands how virtuous the engagement process really is. This in turn leads to "educating" the potential participant in a way that is more like a sales pitch than like education. At its worst, the reaction to skepticism

can be a belief that the potential participant is ungrateful for the opportunity to participate and therefore does not deserve a seat at the table anyway.

But seeing skepticism as an aberration on the participant's part denies the validity of a potential participant's past experiences with community engagement. If she or he has been involved in engagement processes that have not lived up to their promise, then skepticism is not an aberration – it is a logical reaction to past experience, a recognition that having a seat at the table is not the same as having a respected voice at the table.

A better course of action on the part of the sponsor of a process involves;

- acknowledging that the potential participant has a right to be skeptical
- providing an explanation of those features of the impeding engagement process that are meant to increase the chances that all voices will be heard and heeded
- being frank and honest about the likely limitations and uncertainties of the impending engagement process
- making it possible for a skeptic to participate on a provisional basis (i.e. not requiring an up-front, long term commitment to the process), so the potential participant can "test the waters"
- welcoming and acting on the basis of participant suggestions about how to make the process more effective in terms of ensuring voices are heard, and

- leaving it up to the potential participant to weigh the promises of the process against its limitations and uncertainties, and respecting his or her decision about whether to take part and how to take part.

Who Speaks For a Community?

Sometimes a person rooted in a community will offer to participate in an engagement process. In other communities, a well established and credible selection process may be in place allowing the community to select its delegate to an engagement process. But in other instances, the organizers of a process may need to seek out suitable participants.

In identifying participants it is important to distinguish between two concepts:

1. **Participation as a community's delegate or representative.**
   A person who is a delegate or representative is often required by her "constituency" (or feels an internal obligation) to speak on behalf of the community, to defend its interests and to make no comments or take no action that can be construed as criticism of, or a unilateral compromise on, matters of concern to the community. She may also feel an obligation to check back with her constituency before taking positions on any major issues.

2. **Participation as someone knowledgeable about the community, but not as its representative.**
   A person who fills this role may have a great deal of knowledge about his community (and may have contacts in the community allowing him to gain even greater knowledge), and he may feel an obligation to air his community's perspectives within the context of a multi-stakeholder engagement process. However, he may also feel free to disagree with his community's perspectives when, in his judgment, another perspective makes more sense. He may therefore be more flexible than a representative or delegate, but he may not be able to carry his community's weight with him when he ventures an opinion or takes action. In fact, the community of which he is a member may – in extreme circumstances – disavow him and insist that he be replaced by a representative member.

The purposes of any engagement process may determine whether representative or non-representative community members are warranted. For instance, engagement processes meant to be negotiations among separate parties and meant to produce relatively formal agreements by the end of the process often benefit from having community representatives/delegates at the table. On the other hand, planning processes often require people capable of looking beyond their own constituency – people capable of behaving adjudicationally rather than as representatives.

There are no hard and fast rules about "which type, and when," but it is important to at least acknowledge the two approaches and to foster shared discussion and agreement among participants about which role is appropriate to that particular process.

Sometimes, both kinds of participants from a community should be engaged, but in different ways.

Example:

A LHIN wants to engage mental health consumer/survivors in exploring service improvement. There are four formal consumer/survivor support agencies in the area, each with a hired staff member (who is also a consumer/survivor) and an elected chairperson. The LHIN decides to ask each staff person and chair to serve on a focus group so each agency's interests can be put on the table.

However, the LHIN also decides to conduct ten one-on-one confidential interviews with mental health consumer survivors to uncover their perceptions of need and service adequacy. During the course of the interviews, several interviewees indicate that, in their judgment, the quality of service provided to them by these four support agencies is lower than the agencies claim it to be. The LHIN engagement process must now reconcile the representational and adjudicational perspectives – but at least it has learned that there are two perspectives that need to be considered.

The Perception of Bias
Impartiality – defined as equal receptivity to ideas and observations from everyone involved in the engagement process – is a hallmark of transparency. However, inadvertent signals from those who manage or provide support to the process can lead others to believe not all voices are equal, and that if there is not a hidden agenda, there are at least unequal agendas. This can be a particular danger because those with the technical skills to manage and support a process are often drawn from the same backgrounds and occupational settings as some of the more empowered communities at the table.

Example:

Erin, the facilitator of a multi-community focus group, leans over the table before a meeting formally begins and says to one of the participants, in an attempt to be affable:

"Gee, somebody told me the other day that you graduated from Health Administration at the University of Toronto. So did I! We really should get together for coffee – I'd love to find out more about what you've done in your career since graduation".

At the other end of the table Anjali, a cancer survivor who left school when she was sixteen and works as a clerk in a tire store, makes a mental note not to say anything critical of health service administrators, or of the services they manage, at any future group meetings.

3.4 Decide What Tools to Use

Engagement involves a range of techniques and tools. Some are more resource-intensive than others, and it is sometimes possible to maximize the number of participants that can be involved by using less resource-intensive methods of engagement for some or all of the communities that can lay claim to a place at the table (using focus groups rather than one-on-one meetings or interviews for instance).

Section 5 of this module provides a detailed review of many of the available tools.

3.5 Obtain the Necessary Resources

Sometimes the resources available to carry out an engagement process are relatively fixed, and known in advance. In such cases, the "given" resource base will in large measure determine the answers to the previous two steps (who to engage and what tools to use).

On the other hand, it is sometimes possible to approach the powers-that-be with a clear case for why consultation is necessary, who needs to be engaged and what tools are best to use, thereby making it more likely that the "given" resources match the necessary resources.

3.6 Engage Communities Using the Selected Tools

Some of the purposes for which community engagement processes are developed may be multi-stage purposes. Engaging communities in strategic planning is the most visible example of this.

In such processes, it is vital to engage communities at the earliest possible stage and to continue to foster their engagement at all subsequent stages. For instance, in a planning process communities should be involved in;

- establishing the goals for the sector being planned,
- identifying the current status of the sector under consideration (i.e. identifying shortfalls between what is and what ought to be),
- identifying possible solutions to the shortfalls,
- identifying the preferred solutions,
- participating in planning for how to implement the solutions, and
- helping to determine how to evaluate the solutions after they have been implemented.

To engage communities only in the later stages denies them the opportunity to influence the first principles that drive the planning. It can also foster the impression that the final outcome is a done deal, requiring only rubber stamp approval.

3.7 Monitor the Engagement Process

Monitoring the process is essential to ensure that the project is achieving its goals as stated in the project's strategy and plan, and that it is accomplishing this on time and within available resources.

Early in the life of an engagement process it is useful to develop yardsticks that will measure success or lack of success at each stage in the process. For instance, a project might determine that three measures of success in the engagement are;

- an "agreement-to-participate rate" of 80% (meaning 80% of those asked to participate actually do participate),
- a participant drop-out rate of 5% or less at mid-point in the engagement project, and
- ongoing participant support for the purposes of the engagement process.

If the project discovers that the agreement-to-participate is only 50%, or that the mid-point dropout rate is 25%, or that participants are constantly criticizing the purpose of the project, corrective actions can be taken.

Module 7 in this toolkit (Assessment & Evaluation) provides information on both the monitoring and evaluation functions.

3.8 Share the Results With Participants and Decision-Makers

In community engagement, uncertainty is the enemy of success. People who are engaged in the process will generally want to be kept informed of what is happening within the project and what is being done with their input.

Similarly, decision-makers who have supported the project should be given regular updates on the good and the not-so-good elements of the project as it unfolds, to secure their ongoing support and their help if necessary in making project adjustments.

Section 6.5 of this module (Elements of Good Communication) provides an overview of the need to provide transparency in engagement projects – an essential and desirable characteristic of sharing results.

3.9 Assist Decision-Makers in Understanding the Process and Results

Decision-makers seldom have time to understand all the nuances of a community engagement process. It is important, therefore, that the project's leaders ensure succinct interim and final briefings of decision-makers, focusing on how the project's results match the purposes of the project and why the chosen engagement methods are/were the best way to achieve these results.

3.10 Evaluate, and Monitor the Implementation of the Results

During the strategizing and planning phase, the project will have identified *"how"* to evaluate both the process and outcomes of the engagement process. Based on information gathered during and at the end of the project, the project's leaders can evaluate both the process and the immediate outcomes. However, longer-term outcomes can only be measured some time after project completion.

Appendix C contains information on how two jurisdictions – Scotland, and the State of Queensland in Australia – address monitoring and evaluation of community engagement. As well, Module 7 in this series (Assessment & Evaluation) contains information that applies to many projects, including community engagement projects.

Tip: Deciding when to collect data

In most situations data should be collected:

- during the course of a program – as part of a continuous improvement cycle;
- shortly after the program has finished – to explore the short-term outcomes; and
- after a period of time – to explore the medium to longer-term outcomes and/or the sustainability of changes that result.

Source: *Engaging Queenslanders: Evaluation Community Engagement,* Government of Queensland

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3.11 Taking the Time to Build the Engagement Foundation

Participants in a multi-community engagement process may not know each other. They may have different expectations of what is feasible and desirable within the process. They may have varying degrees of confidence in their ability to contribute to the process. They may have different initial attitudes toward the process (some may be suspicious, some may be skeptical, some may be hopeful, some may be enthusiastic). They may also have differing initial communication styles (some may be accustomed to confrontation and bluntness while others may be comfortable only with mutual support and circumspection).

"We've always been acculturated to believe that the BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] or the Indian Health Service or somebody else had better ideas for us that we ourselves had, and so trusting our own thinking, tearing that away from them and getting it back I think is the single most important task we have ahead of us, and we've started that. It's gonna take a long time. We've started that on porches in eastern Oklahoma and in kitchens and in community centers. We've started talking about why we should take our own lives back."

Wilma Mankiller (former Chief of the Cherokee Nation), *Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation*

If a group settles into its core business too quickly, differences may widen and become divisive. On the other hand, if participants accept enough learning time at the beginning of the process, the chances that a composite group culture will emerge are heightened.

In group settings there is sometimes a well meaning task-oriented member who says near the beginning of the process, *"We've talked enough – now let's get some action"*. However, in an organizational cultural sense, too little initial talk can lead to too little concerted action later in the process.

The Asker's Clock and The Teller's Clock

Governments and other official bodies may want community input, even on complex and contentious issues, within tight timeframes. This can occur for three reasons;

1. because the official body is faced with a crisis which drives the time frame – and within the time dictated by the crisis, the body wants community input (albeit in a limited way) rather than ignoring the community altogether

2. because the official body does not consider input crucial: it may simply want to check off the box *"have you consulted the community?"* when it produces its report

3. because the official body, although it believes in community input, does not understand the time it takes for communities to engage fully in a change process.

It is arguable whether quickly mobilizing a few community members to respond to such requests is community engagement at all. Nevertheless, these occasions are an opportunity – although not an ideal opportunity – to raise community voices and it may be important to exploit these opportunities when the alternative is no influence at all. On the other hand, some argue that cooperating with such requests perpetuates the belief that communities are almost bovine in their willingness to accept someone else's time frame rather than insisting on their own time frame.

Of the three reasons for short-time community consultations cited above, the third reason is the most well meant (the intent to consult is present, but knowledge of how to do it is not). One way official bodies can prevent this scenario is to ensure that, at the earliest stage of thinking about exploration of an issue, a community engagement strategy is developed by the official body, in partnership with communities if at all possible, and with realistic timelines built into the strategy.

3.12 Understanding the Costs of Engagement

Community engagement processes have overt and hidden costs. Overt costs are usually covered by the process's budget. Hidden costs are usually not covered by anybody but the person incurring the costs. The most pronounced hidden costs are often the lost opportunity costs and the inconvenience costs associated with participants' investment of their time in the process. Understanding the hidden costs, and doing whatever is possible to see that these hidden costs do not fall more heavily on some members but not on others, can help prevent resentment from creeping into the process.

Example:

A multi-community planning group intends to hold at least ten meetings to help shape services for young mothers and their children. Adnan, an agency social worker with a very heavy workload, considers service on the group as part of his job and insists that meetings be held during the day so his work does not cut into his precious and limited evening hours which he wants to spend with his young children.

Crystal is also on the group. If evening meetings were held her partner would provide child care while she is at meetings. If the meeting is during the day she must select and pay a babysitter. Crystal uses a wheelchair as a mobility aid. If meetings were in the evening her partner could drive her to the meetings – but for a day meeting she must use the local assisted transportation system and must factor in the wait time for this bus to arrive.

Whose time is more valuable? If their time is equally valuable, how does the group organize itself so the burden of participation falls equally on Crystal and Adnan?

Section 4

Tensions Within Community Engagement

Societal endeavours have tensions built into them. By a tension, we mean a tug between opposing views of how to do something for the sake of a societal good. Community engagement is no exception.

> **Example:**
>
> People in Twin River mobilize to develop service and support for people with addictions. Early in their discussion it is clear there is a division between those who support abstinence as the sole goal of service to people with addictions and those who take a harm reduction approach (they believe reducing use of addicting substances is also a valid goal). After weeks of debate both sides agree there is no "middle position" in terms of their belief systems about addiction. But with the help of facilitation they arrive at a position that manages the tension between them:
>
> - At least one program should operate in the community based on the abstinence model, and at least one program based on the harm reduction model.
> - Both programs should be operated by the Twin River Community Health Centre, which agrees to run the programs as separate entities.
> - A single intake and assessment component should be created to make potential clients aware of the two philosophies and to encourage each client to make an informed choice between the options.
>
> Neither side accepts this as an ideal solution. Both sides accept it as a workable solution. And out of the discussion emerges the primacy of client choice as the determinant of who gets what service.

Tensions can be seen as flaws in a societal endeavour. On the other hand, they can be seen as inevitable results of complex human processes and beliefs – results that, if untended, become dangerous, but if managed become sources of opportunity and ingenuity. And the art of managing tensions seldom lies in blowing away one side of the tension in favour of the other. It more often lies in recognizing that both poles have a degree of validity to them. This relationship sometimes involves finding a middle position that displaces the original positions, but often such middle positions are not feasible. The art then lies in finding ways to manage the relationship between the two positions.

What follows is a sample of the tensions that can arise in community engagement.

mobilization by participant communities ⟷ **mobilization by an external agent**

On one hand, mobilization initiated by participant communities themselves is a welcome sign that communities will be committed to the process, and sometimes it makes sense to delay creating a community engagement process until the communities themselves identify a need for it. On the other hand, communities that do not initially see their common stake in an issue may need to be mobilized with the help of an external agent.

addressing a few purposes in a well resourced way ⟷ **addressing many purposes, with stretched resources**
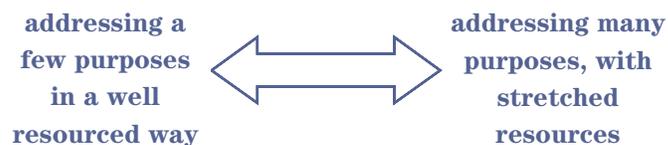
If a community process has limited resources provided from outside or by the communities themselves, it may be wise to focus these resources on a few crucial purposes. However, if a number of purposes (often interlocked and dependent on each other) are considered valid, it may make sense to spread available resources across these multiple purposes.

engaging a few communities and community members, more thoroughly ⟷ **engaging more communities and community members, less thoroughly**
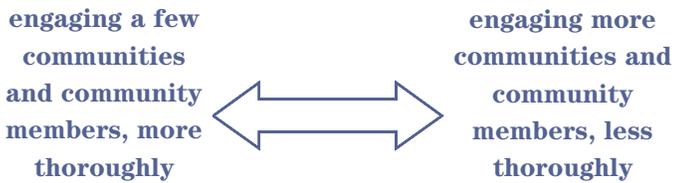
Sometimes drawing boundaries around an engagement process requires engaging only a few communities in the project and maximizing the involvement of members of these communities. On the other hand, if a large number of communities can lay claim to involvement it may be necessary to involve many communities while limiting the number of participants from each community, if only to live within the project's resources.

**people as members of communities** ⟷ **people as individuals**

People drawn to a community engagement process may well reflect the communities from which they are drawn. On the other hand, they may have unique personal experiences and perceptions that are no less valid simply because they are personal, not community-driven.

creating project transparency ⟷ **respecting the privacy of participant opinion**
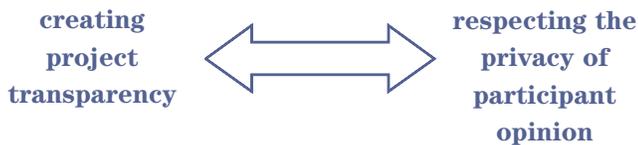
Project transparency is often cited as a predictor of engagement success. However, when participants share opinions freely – controversial opinions perhaps, or thoughts that are tentative at best – there may be an obligation to ask for a degree of confidentiality around disclosure of individuals' opinions beyond the confines of the meeting where the opinions were aired.

pragmatic outcomes ⟷ **utopian outcomes**

Some participants in a community engagement may argue for pragmatic outcomes – things that have some probability of achievement. Others may hold out for more utopian outcomes, even though the chances of achieving the outcomes are slim.

engaging those who are most willing to be engaged ⟷ **engaging those who are most likely to be affected by outcomes**
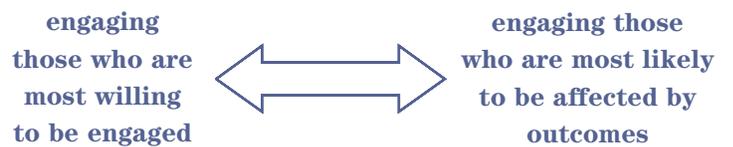
In an engagement process some communities and individuals may be easy to identify as participants and may be easy to engage – but engaging only these people may produce an incomplete array of participants. On the other hand, there may be populations likely to be affected by the project's outcomes that are hard to engage (because they are cynical or alienated for instance). While these participants may be worth pursuing there are limits to the degree to which a project should stall to await latecomers.

process consistency ⟷ **process flexibility**

For the sake of overall coherence it may be necessary to have a degree of consistency in terms of processes, roles and activities throughout an engagement project. On the other hand, the process may need to be flexible to allow for new information, insights, participants and responses to new environmental conditions.

representational participation ⟷ **adjudicational participation**

The engagement of people who have the authority to commit their communities to positions and actions (even if they must check back with their communities first) has advantages in terms of capacity to take joint action. On the other hand such participants may rigidly represent a position within what they consider to be a "we-they" paradigm. People who have greater independence of thought and action within an engagement process may be more likely to think independently while also allowing themselves to more easily weigh the validity of the thoughts of others (in short they may function adjudicationally rather than representationally). However they may be able to commit no one but themselves to whatever action emerges from the process.

influencing others ⟷ **being influenced by others**

Participants in an engagement process (including the organizers of the process) may enter it with a desire to influence others. On the other hand, leaving oneself open to enrichment through the influence and ideas of others is often a major outcome of community engagement processes.

evidence as a process driver ⟷ **negotiation as a process driver**

Some participants in a community engagement process may be strong proponents of the idea that clear objective evidence should guide deliberations, and that outcomes should be driven only by evidence. Others may believe that not everything is interpretable and doable based on objective evidence alone: these individuals may be more prone to negotiate based on the "relative realities" faced by each participant in the process rather than relying on objective evidence alone.

power as a process driver ⟷ **influence as a process driver**

Some people may take part in the process on the premise that the formal transfer of power from the more powerful to the less powerful is the only legitimate goal of community engagement. Others may believe the capacity to influence the powerful is a valid goal (and they may believe that in some circumstances it is the only feasible goal).

unanimity ⟷ **diversity of opinion**

Some participants may believe that unanimity and consensus, or at least majority opinion, is essential to the outcomes of community engagement, and that therefore the process must find ways to narrow the range of positions held by participants. Others may argue that respect for divergent opinions is essential in an engagement process and that reflecting diverse opinions is itself a valid outcome of community engagement.

addressing community strengths ⟷ **addressing community deficits**

Some community engagement participants may focus on community strengths and how to preserve or add to those strengths. Other participants may focus on community deficits and the identification of outside resources that should be brought in to deal with these deficits.

innovation ⟷ **playing it safe**

Some people involved in an engagement process may want to be highly innovative even if this involves significant risks. Others may prefer to take less risk for fear of alienating others or for fear of trying something untested that may fail.

Section 5

Engagement Tools

A number of tools can be used to foster community engagement. What follows are descriptions of thirteen of these tools, divided into two categories:

- tools to reach and engage **individual** stakeholders, and
- tools to reach and engage **groups** of stakeholders.

For brevity's sake, the listing and description of tools does not include tools meant simply to convey information to stakeholders. This is discussed more fully in Section 6 of this module (Communication).

Each tool uses a variety of techniques (just as there are several ways to use a crochet hook or a saw). The descriptions of tools do not try to list all of the techniques that may be used, although in a few instances techniques have been cited that are popular or innovative. The following chart compares these tools on a number of dimensions.

Table 3: A Comparison of Community Engagement Tools

		CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOOLS						
		# of people reachable at reasonable cost	value for asking complex questions	allows for multiple stakeholder interaction	easy clarification of responses/ comments	capacity to sustain an ongoing process	ease in providing advance material	specialized resources needed
TOOLS TO REACH AND ENGAGE INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDERS								
1.	**Telephone Surveys**	large	moderate	no	moderate	low	low	surveyors and format designers
2.	**Mail-out Surveys**	large	low	no	low	low	moderate	format designers
3.	**Internet Surveys**	large	low	no	low	low	high	format designers
4.	**Face-to-face Interviews**	medium	medium	no	moderate	moderate	high	interviewers and format designers
TOOLS TO REACH AND ENGAGE GROUPS								
5.	**Public Meetings**	medium	low	limited	moderate	low	low	chairperson
6.	**Public Hearings**	medium	low	limited	moderate	low	low	chairperson
7.	**Open Houses**	medium	moderate	limited	high	low	low	chairperson
8.	**Focus Groups**	small	high	high	high	high	high	facilitator
9.	**Open Space Meetings**	medium	high	high	high	medium	medium	facilitator
10.	**Task Groups**	small	high	high	high	high	high	task leader
11.	**Citizen Panels**	small	high	high	high	low	high	facilitator
12.	**On-line Dialogue**	large	moderate	high	moderate	high	high	format designer and moderator
13.	**Delphi Technique**	moderate	low	moderate	moderate	high	high	Delphi facilitator

The most important rule in using any of these tools is: **the purposes should drive the tools; the tools should not drive the purposes.**

5.1 Tools to Reach and Engage Individual Stakeholders

These tools involve interaction between a questioner and a respondent. And with the exception of face-to-face and telephone interviews, these tools generally limit interaction to a basic level (a question is asked and a question is answered, with little option for rich dialogue about either the question or the answer). Unlike group-oriented tools they do not allow for significant interaction **among** respondents.

Telephone Surveys

Telephone surveys (a classical polling tool) are a good way to reach large numbers of people so a set of relatively simple questions posed by a trained telephone interviewer can be answered. Often the questions can only be answered on a scale (from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" for instance). It is possible for interviewers to ask follow-up questions or to clarify answers, but these techniques tend to add to the duration of each call and cost per call, and can try the patience of the interviewee.

Telephone surveys are generally based on calls to recipients chosen at random (although there can be some degree of sample selection – people living within a particular geographical community for instance). Generally, call recipients have no advance notice of the call.

There is often a high refusal rate with telephone surveys since people may believe the call is a sales pitch and may decline to participate. As well, the "connect rate" (percentage of calls in which someone answers the phone) may be low since the potential interviewee must be available to answer the phone when the call is made.

It is difficult to provide material to call recipients in advance of a call and it is also hard to engage the call recipient in an engagement process beyond the call (although an interviewer may ask the call recipient if she wants further information or engagement).

Mail-out and e-mail Surveys

Like phone surveys, mail-out and e-mail surveys can reach large numbers of people. The structure and content of mail-out and e-mail surveys is often very similar to the structure and content of telephone surveys, although there is no skilled interviewer involved who can clarify responses. The "connect rate" may be higher for mail-out surveys than for phone surveys (most people open their mail if they don't think it is junk mail) but the refusal rate may be high (people can choose not to respond without fear of offending a voice on the other end of the line). Slightly more complex questions can be posed in mail-out or e-mail surveys, since the respondent has a little more time to reflect on both the background material introducing the questions, on each specific question and on his answer before responding.

This tool does not work well for eliciting information from people with low levels of literacy, as it allows no interaction with the questioner. E-mail surveys may also contain potential bias against disadvantaged populations with no e-mail access.

Internet Surveys

This tool is good for reaching larger numbers of people, provided they are comfortable with and can access the Internet (it therefore contains potential bias against disadvantaged populations with no Internet access). As with the previous two survey tools, it is good for asking a large number of fairly simple questions. Like mail-out or e-mail surveys, it allows no real-time interaction with the questioner. It is relatively easy to provide on-line explanatory material to participants but difficult to elicit clarification of answers to questions.

Internet surveys usually require some other medium to make respondents aware that they can provide answers on-line (although some respondents may run across the opportunity to reply when they are visiting a website). Potential respondents may be invited to respond via e-mail for instance, or by snail mail or word of mouth.

Dropout rates can be high if the respondent encounters technical difficulties filling in an on-line survey (or

chooses not to try in the first place if they have had previous negative experience with on-line surveys). As well, it is hard to generalize the results of Internet surveys since it is impossible to estimate response rates and bias in terms of who chose to respond.

A good resource pointing out pitfalls in online surveys, entitled 21 Common e-Consultation Mistakes, is found at http://www.delib.co.uk/e-consultation/21_Common_e-Consultation_Mistakes.pdf.

Face-to-Face and Telephone Interviews

Face-to-face interviews are the most resource-intensive tool for reaching individual stakeholders (either the interviewer must come to the respondent, or the respondent must come to the interviewer) and are therefore not good tools for reaching large numbers of people. However, such interviews are well suited to asking a small number of complex questions. Telephone interviews are somewhat less resource-intensive and are often used when distance, scheduling or project budget limitations make face-to-face interviews unfeasible.

Face-to-face interviews also allow for a richness of interaction between interviewer and respondent and allow both questions and answers to be discussed and clarified in the course of the dialogue. Telephone interviews also allow a fair level of richness, but the information carried in non-verbal cues ("body language") is lost in telephone interviews.

Telephone *interviews* differ from telephone *surveys* in two ways:

- Telephone interviews are usually held at a time agreed upon between interviewer and respondent in advance. The respondent therefore knows she will be asked questions or asked to take part in dialogue, and may know what the questions and issues are in advance. Telephone survey calls, on the other hand, are usually "cold calls" with no advance notification to the respondent.
- Telephone surveys try to ask a large number of simple questions. Telephone interviews are more appropriate for asking a small number of complex questions.

5.2 Tools to Reach and Engage Groups of Stakeholders

These tools are often a cost effective way to engage groups in an engagement process. Many of the tools are more than convenience: they are ways to encourage communication among people drawn from participant communities, and not just to encourage communication with the engagement's sponsors.

> "Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me, why should you not speak to me? And why should I not speak to you?"
>
> Walt Whitman, To You, in *Leaves of Grass*

Several of the tools cited below involve meetings, yet such meetings can pose challenges for people with disabilities. The website of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (part of the Ministry of Community and Social Services) contains a section on planning accessible meetings, found at http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/how/howto_meeting.htm.

Public Meetings

Public meetings are among the most traditional methods of engaging communities. Generally, public meetings are advertised to attract a good range and number of attendees. Most often, the sponsors of the meeting provide introductory information (and perhaps a specific proposal to which attendees are asked to respond) followed by a question-and-answer session or an invitation for comments from the floor.

A public meeting can engage a fair number of participants (up to several hundred) but as the number of active participants increases, the chance for any one participant to have much to say at the meeting decreases.

To promote access (particularly on issues that affect people across a large geographical area) several public meetings may need to be held across the area. Also, to promote access, public meetings should make

provisions for people with mobility or sensory limitations to attend and participate. When numbers within the population warrant, the meeting should also have the capacity to address issues in more than one language (this will be especially important in communities in Ontario that are designated under the French Language Services Act).

Public meetings are usually one-time events, although attendees can be asked to sign a list if they want to receive follow-up information or to be further involved in whatever process is underway (a public meeting can be a good vehicle for recruiting people to be involved in longer-term engagement with the project).

> "When a project is announced, a relatively small number of people who are often its immediate neighbours, voice their opposition. The proponent typically calls a public meeting in order to explain the project to them, confident that their opposition will then disappear. In fact, the public meeting usually crystallizes a more informed, organized and articulate opposition and generates widespread negative publicity for the proponent and the project."
>
> Desmond M. Connor, *Preventing and Resolving Public Controversy*, Connor Development |Services Ltd.

The chief drawback of public meetings is the possibility that they will be hijacked by a group that tries to monopolize the floor, intimidating or silencing those will different points of view. This may happen if the issue under consideration is highly contentious, and the possibility of disruption is magnified because public meetings tend to attract people with the strongest pro and con positions. As well, pubic meetings may tend to polarize opinions rather than acting as a vehicle for bringing divergent opinions into either harmony or truce.

Public meetings may not be effective in engaging people who are uncomfortable attending or speaking up at events that involve a sizeable number of people.

Public Hearings

Public hearings are akin to public meetings, but with an added layer of formality. Often sponsored by governments and government-sanctioned bodies such as commissions and tribunals, public hearings are usually open to the general public but rules are in place controlling who can speak, for how long, and in what format, and who can question the presenters. Public hearings are often used when a sponsoring body has a legislated or regulated mandate to hold such hearings before it takes action on certain issues.

Public hearings help guarantee consistently applied due process for all who come before the hearing. However, the procedural formality of public hearings can intimidate groups not accustomed to participating in such formal events, and hearings can give an undue edge to communities that are well versed in making polished public presentations and that have the resources to put together such presentations. As well, public hearings generally do little to build consensus. As one analyst put it:

"The classic 'Royal Commission' model does not generally build any consensus. In this model, a set of issues are generally defined and presented to a number of audiences, and each audience generally comments on all issues. The Commissioners then prepare recommendations which may or may not flow from the representations made. There is little or no attempt made to promote compromise."[6]

Open Houses

Open houses are opportunities for concerned or curious individuals to drop into an event, at the time of their choosing within the overall time frame for the open house, to view and receive material on an issue and to engage sponsors in discussion.

Open houses may run all day and into the evening to better meet the schedules of all individuals, and may be held for several days and in several locations to maximize attendance. It is best if at least two agents of the sponsoring organization are present at all times to answer questions and engage visitors in dialogue.

> "Since public meetings often seemed to generate more heat than light - I called them 'the last of the blood sports' - I developed the Open House in the mid-seventies, based on its use by real estate agents. The visitor determines what time they will come, how long they will stay, what questions they will ask etc.- a much more attractive experience than being locked in to a noisy 3-hour or more public meeting with no control of the agenda."
>
> Desmond M. Connor, Constructive Citizen Participation: *An Evolutionary Tale,* found at http://www.connor.bc.ca/evolutionary.html

Open houses overlap the boundary between tools that reach and engage individuals, and tools that reach and engage groups. An individual may visit an open house, but groups may also visit. As well, a skilled "host" can turn a visit by several individuals at the same time into an impromptu group discussion.

One of the virtues of an open house is that even on contentious issues, it is less likely to breed the concerted and domineering opposition found in many public meetings. Opponents may attend an open house but they are not likely to stay to derail the process for twelve hours – and an open house lends itself less to rhetorical flourishes of opposition.

As with public meetings, attendees at an open house can sign a list if they want to receive follow-up information or to be further involved in whatever process is underway, making it a good vehicle for recruiting people to be involved in longer-term engagement with the project.

While there are modest opportunities for attendees to interact with each other during an open house, inter-participant dialogue is not a distinguishing feature of this tool.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are one of the most common tools used in engagement, although these groups go under a variety of names and use a variety of techniques. What they all have in common, however, is interactive exploration and deliberation on a specific issue or set of issues (hence the "focus" part of the term) carried out by a group of people, usually with the help of a leader or facilitator. Focus groups are usually face-to-face, but with video and audio conferencing, focus groups can sometimes effectively be held among people at a distance from each other.

Most focus groups are a few hours in length, although they can run for a full day or more (longer versions are more likely to go under an alternate name such as a forum or workshop). Focus groups can also exist in a sequential series – a set of focus groups several weeks apart for instance, with the same participants invited to each focus group (participants in such a series are sometimes collectively called a task force, advisory panel or working group).

The number of members in a focus group should be fairly limited (12 is often considered an ideal size), both to allow adequate participation by all members and to allow a sense of small group cohesion to develop.

However, if a large number of participants is required to address an issue, multiple focus groups with separate participants in each group can be held (often at different times of day and in different locations to maximize access). Another "multiplier effect" can be created if participants in a focus group, after sufficient experience and training, become adept enough to be able to lead focus groups themselves.

Well conducted focus groups allow for high real-time interactivity among participants.

Participants in focus groups are usually selected before the group meets (there are no visitors "off the street" as there might be with open houses or public meetings for instance). However, it is sometimes possible to piggyback onto other community civic groups to use them as focus groups. For instance, if clients of a

seniors' day centre hold regular meetings on Wednesday afternoons, it may be possible for an engagement project's sponsor to arrange to use a component of one of these regular meetings as a focus group.

Focus groups can be used to explore the dimensions and characteristics of an issue or to develop an understanding of members' differences and agreements related to an issue or to build consensus on an issue.

One variant on focus groups is the **future search** process, a planning technique meant to engage a cross-section of stakeholders in a process of seeking consensus about the desirable future. This technique runs over a longer period than most focus groups (2 or 3 days) and includes a larger than usual number of members (40 or more is not unusual, although part of the future search takes place in breakout groups). The approach is predicated on four guidelines or "conditions for success":[7]

1. Get the "whole system" in the room. Invite a significant cross-section of all parties with a stake in the outcome.
2. Explore the "whole elephant" before seeking to fix any part. Get everyone talking about the same world. Think globally, act locally.
3. Put common ground and future focus front and center while treating problems and conflicts as information, not action items.
4. Encourage self-management and responsibility for action by participants before, during, and after the future search.

The future search process is usually broken into eight steps comprising about 16 hours of meeting time in total:

1. People make time lines of key events in the world, their own lives, and in the history of the future search topic. Small groups tell stories about each time line and the implications of their stories for the work they have come to do.
2. The whole group makes a "mind map" of trends affecting them now and identifies those trends most important for their topic.

3. Stakeholder groups describe what they are doing now about key trends and what they want to do in the future.
4. Stakeholder groups report what they are proud of and sorry about in the way they are dealing with the future search topic.
5. Diverse groups put themselves into the future and describe their preferred future as if it has already been accomplished.
6. Diverse groups post themes they believe are common ground for everyone.
7. Whole group dialogues to agree on common ground.
8. Volunteers sign up to implement action plans.

Open Space Technology Meetings

While open space technology meetings are akin to focus groups, they are generally more self-organizing than most focus groups – participants have a greater say in what will be discussed and have a greater choice about which of a range of discussion sessions to attend. Open space technology meetings normally involve more participants than an average focus group (several hundred people may participate) but the bulk of the work is done in smaller groups within the day or two devoted to the open space technology session.

In a nutshell, near the beginning of open space sessions, each participant has an opportunity to stand up within the group and identify a question, issue, or idea.[8] The participant writes the gist of the issue on a flip chart sheet and posts it on a meeting room wall (the "marketplace"), assigning to it a place and a time at which the issue will be discussed in a small group session. Once all attendees have had a chance to post their issues, participants go to the wall and sign up for the session or sessions that interest them.

Proceedings of the small group meetings are then provided to participants, usually after the open space technology session has ended.

Task Groups

Task groups (which are similar to focus groups) are often not considered a community engagement tool. However, they can usefully exhibit the principle that "doing promotes cohesion".

A task group is usually even more focused than most focus groups. The emphasis is on getting a specific piece of work done (development of a public relations process for example), not on the "assembly line" model in which each participant carries out a part of the task in isolation from others, but on the "quilting bee" model in which all workers are together at the same table and able to communicate constantly with each other. If a skilled task coordinator is present, the chances that the task process will be both creative and cohesive, rather than destructive and alienating, is heightened. This cohesion can then serve other parts of the engagement process.

Citizen Panels

Citizen panels are also called citizen juries, citizen conferences and (in Denmark where the concept originated) consensus conferences.

Citizen panels are based on the premise that a randomly selected small group of willing participants (usually fewer than 20) who are not experts in a field, if given proper information and support, can teach consensus on policy, even when that policy relates to a highly complex issue area. The randomness of panel member selection is often adjusted by additional criteria to ensure gender, racial, socioeconomic and other diversity.

In 2004 the government of British Columbia convened a larger version of a citizen panel – a panel of 160 citizens (a woman and a man randomly selected from each legislative district) to study and make recommendations on electoral reform. They met every other weekend for a year, generating recommendations for citizen approval. However, the panel's recommendation that proportional representation be introduced into B.C.'s electoral system was defeated in a referendum (even though opinion polls had shown that a majority of British Columbians supported the panel's recommendation).

> "Our current political system is crippled by the absence of anything that accurately represents the thoughtful, integrated insight of 'we, the people.' A natural, sensible approach would be through convening a cross section of the population in high-quality dialogue, with full access to whatever information is vital to their deliberations, and helping them find common ground, and then publicizing their work to the public and its representatives."
>
> Tom Atlee, *Citizen Panels*, in Yes! Magazine, Winter 2003

The Government of Ontario has also started to use citizen panels:

- In November 2004, Ontario Premier McGuinty announced plans for both a Citizens Jury and a Citizens Assembly, both focusing on different aspects of electoral or political reform. A Citizens Jury will be asked to make recommendations to the government regarding changes in how provincial political parties and election campaigns are financed, including potential changes to Ontario's political spending and contribution limits. The Citizens Assembly, inspired by the British Columbia initiative, will focus on examining Ontario's first-past-the-post electoral system and recommend possible changes. The Assembly's 103 members will begin meeting in September 2006.

- In 2004, more than 250 Ontario citizens took part in day-long dialogue sessions organized by Canadian Policy Research Networks in six cities across the province to provide advice on Ontario's budget strategy for 2004 to 2008.[9] All participants were randomly selected by a professional polling firm to reflect an unaffiliated cross-section of voting aged adults.

Most citizen panels are first of all convened to hear "testimony" from experts and to ask questions of the experts (who are expected to provide information but not to lobby for a particular point of view). The panel then convenes, sometimes for several days, and issues a final consensus statement.

Citizen panels have been widely used by municipal governments in the United Kingdom. In Denmark, government approval of a new technology is not given until a citizen panel has reviewed the advisability of approving the technology.

On-Line Dialogue

On-line dialogue (as contrasted to on-line surveys) is a burgeoning field of engagement, abetted by improvements in Internet technology, that allows real-time conversations to take place among participants at a distance from each other. The full potential of this tool has not yet been explored, but like on-line surveys, this tool may discriminate against those who do not have Internet access.

This tool has the advantage of not requiring people to travel from their home locations to take part in dialogue.

Delphi Techniques

The Delphi technique was developed in the 1950s by the Rand Corporation to provide a method for building consensus among experts in a way that did not reflect the influence of experts with prestigious titles or with extraordinarily strong ways of exerting their personal influence. Since then, Delphi has also been used to build consensus among non-experts on a range of topics.[10]

The technique usually starts with a canvass of participants to gauge what issues they consider important, and/or what their attitude is on certain issues. The responses are then analyzed and patterns of consensus or diversion are fed back to participants, who again state their priorities or opinion on the same subject a second time. Several iterative rounds may take place before the limits of consensus have been reached.

The technique is based on the premise that the participants, once their opinions are moderated by the opinions of others, will tend to move in the direction of consensus.

Key to the use of this tool is the anonymity of participants (no one knows who took what position on any issue).

5.3 Other Innovations

Building Communities From the Inside Out

John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight have drawn a great deal of attention in the last two decades because of their successful theoretical and on-the-ground activities related to community development. While this module is about community engagement rather than community development, there are nonetheless creative ideas from community development that relate to engagement as well (in part because community engagement is an essential first step in community development). One of these is Kretzmann and McKnight's concept of mapping the assets of communities. As they say in the introduction to their book *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets:*[11]

"Each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future. A thorough map of those assets would begin with an inventory of the gifts, skills and capacities of the community's residents. Household by household, building by building, block by block, the capacity mapmakers will discover a vast and often surprising array of individual talents and productive skills, few of which are being mobilized for community-building purposes. This basic truth about the 'giftedness' of every individual is particularly important to apply to persons who often find themselves marginalized by communities. It is essential to recognize the capacities, for example, of those who have been labeled mentally handicapped or disabled, or of those who are marginalized because they are too old, or too young, or too poor. In a community whose assets are being fully recognized and mobilized, these people too will be part of the action, not as clients or recipients of aid, but as full contributors to the community-building process.

In addition to mapping the gifts and skills of individuals, and of households and families, the committed community builder will compile an inventory of citizens' associations. These associations, less formal and much less dependent upon paid staff than are formal institutions, are the vehicles through

which citizens… assemble to solve problems, or to share common interests and activities… Beyond the individuals and local associations that make up the asset base of communities are all of the more formal institutions which are located in the community."

Community asset mapping can be useful in community engagement in two ways:[12]

1. It helps identify organizations within a community that should be engaged.

2. It helps identify community resources that can contribute to the solutions to problems identified through community engagement.

Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA), also known as participatory rapid appraisal, is an outgrowth of rapid rural appraisal – a set of techniques developed in the 1970s for use in rural areas.[13] In PRA, community members take the lead in data collection and analysis, with outsiders acting only as facilitators. While this technique was first developed for use in developing countries, particularly in rural agricultural areas, it has lent itself well to use in urban communities in developed countries as well.

Participatory rural appraisal is based on five principles:

1. **Participation.** Local people's input into PRA activities is essential to its value as a research and planning method and as a means for diffusing the participatory approach to development.

2. **Teamwork.** To the extent that the validity of PRA data relies on informal interaction and brainstorming among those involved, it is best done by a team that includes local people with perspective and knowledge of the area's conditions, traditions, and social structure and either nationals or expatriates with a complementary mix of disciplinary backgrounds and experience. A well-balanced team will represent the diversity of socioeconomic, cultural, gender, and generational perspectives.

3. **Flexibility.** PRA does not provide blueprints for its practitioners. The combination of techniques that is appropriate in a particular development context will be determined by such variables as the size and skill mix of the PRA team, the time and resources available, and the topic and location of the work.

4. **Optimal ignorance.** To be efficient in terms of both time and money, PRA work intends to gather just enough information to make the necessary recommendations and decisions.

5. **Triangulation.** PRA works with qualitative data. To ensure that information is valid and reliable, PRA teams follow the rule of thumb that at least three sources must be consulted, or techniques used, to investigate the same topics.

Big Brother

Derbyshire Rural Community Council's innovative ways of consulting with young people using local services include its Big Brother initiative. As the Community Council describes it:

"Of all the consultation techniques, the most exciting and rewarding was The Big Brother Diary Room. As it sounds, the Big Brother Diary Room was a small room or space offering young people in groups, or individually to speak in private and voice their views on camcorder. The workers would be the first to admit to the idea being a blatant attempt to engage young people through the medium of popular culture. Young people were invited, enticed and encouraged to record their views on video.

The idea was simple, and equipment minimal. Just a comfy space, and camcorder along with some well thought out questions and lots of enthusiasm. Big Brother himself, or herself, was hidden in a separate location with a monitor, asking questions and seeking opinions in a way that was familiar and fun.

Having said that, the workers did find through experience that the more like the T.V. set they could make the Diary Room, the better the kids' reaction, and the more freely they shared information. As the project progressed the set gained inflatable purple chairs, low lighting and so on.

The young people who gave their views to Big Brother really enjoyed the experience and their input has been invaluable to the agencies seeking information about services, job opportunities, services and activities for young people.

For Big Brother to work effectively it was important that it did not stand alone. The most successful outcomes were achieved when one of the youth workers was on hand to encourage, exhort and badger participants into having a go! Incentives sometimes involved priority tickets to the most popular activities."[14]

Section 6

Communication

Communication is both the glue and the oil that allow processes to hold together and to minimize friction. Bad communication hides things and breeds division. Good communication enlightens and builds trust – and both light and trust are essential to any community engagement process.

This section explores broad features of communication and explores in greater depth several of these features, emphasizing the use of communication as a tool in community engagement.

6.1 What is Communication?

Communication is the transfer of information (including opinion) between and among parties in an ongoing, planned way. While communication has a beginning and an end, strategic communication is seldom limited to one message or one transmission of that message.

> Strategic communication is the transfer of information (including opinion) between and among parties in an ongoing, planned way.

But communication can be "strategic" in another way. Since communication is a tool, not an end in itself, strategic communication exists **in support of other strategies** such as community engagement.

Often the driving strategy around which a communication package wraps itself is;

- **preceded** by communication aimed at kick-starting the driving strategy, and
- **followed** by communication aimed at carrying the driving strategy's results forward.

6.2 Purposes of a Communication Strategy

At its root, communication of all kinds has a single broad purpose: to influence others. In turn, two kinds of influence are relevant:

- Influencing the **beliefs** of the people you want to influence (your target audiences).
- Influencing the **behaviours** of your target audiences.

Any communication strategy should develop a specific statement of its goals in terms of these areas of influence. For instance, a communication strategy for community engagement might identify goals such as these:

Goals related to influencing beliefs:

- We want others to believe that participation is possible.
- We want others to believe that participation is desirable.
- We want participants to believe they have common interests.

Figure 7: The Enabling and Driving Strategies
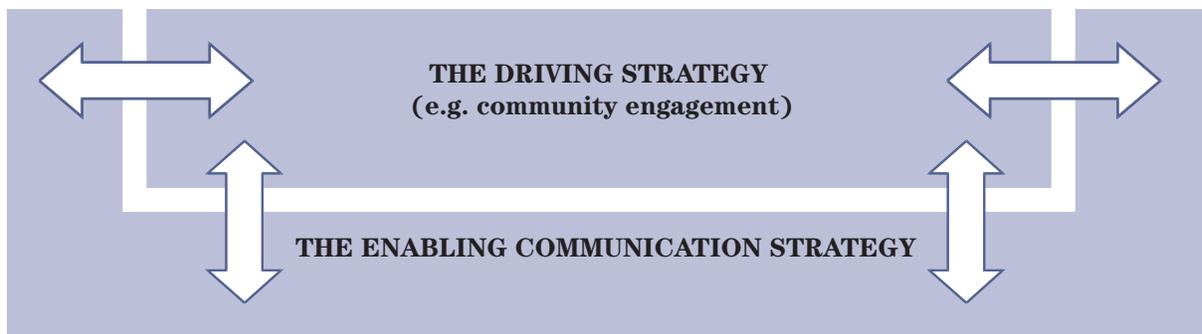
- We want others to believe that their knowledge and wisdom is valuable.
- We want others to believe that the engagement process is fair and honest.
- We want others to believe that the community engagement process is flexible.
- We want others to believe that all participants are trustworthy.
- We want others to believe that all participants are competent.

Goals related to influencing behaviour:
- We want others to identify their common interests.
- We want others to participate fully and freely in the community engagement process.
- We want others to communicate openly and in a timely way with their partners.
- We want participants to feel safe enough to tell the truth as they see it.
- We want others to act on the basis of new knowledge.
- We want participants to spread the net even further by engaging others in the community engagement process.
- We want others to spread the learnings from the community engagement process widely within their own networks and environments.

6.3 Directions of Communication

At its best, communication related to community engagement involves three directions for communication;

1. from the community engagement project's sponsor to all community participants,
2. from all community participants to the community engagement project's sponsor, and
3. among all community participants.

A specific communication technique aimed at any one of the directions should be designed so it facilitates other directions as well. For instance, if a sponsor communicates with all community participants, the

communication should have, embedded within it, three enabling features:

1. An invitation to all participants to respond to the communication.
2. Easy-to-use vehicles to allow this "return" communication.
3. A capacity for all community participants to communicate with each other, without the possibility that the communication will be bottlenecked as it passes back through the engagement project's sponsor.

Communication with the degree of fluidity described above can best be achieved if it is seen not as a series of on-off communications, but rather as a communications network in which each "node" in the network can communicate with all other nodes, any one node, or any subgroup of nodes.

6.4 Developing a Communication Plan

Module 1 (The Planning Process) in this toolkit series describes approaches that can be used in planning. Many of these can be adapted for use in communication planning.

A communication plan should address the following issues:

- The **context** of the communication strategy. This includes the issues that make a communication strategy necessary in the first place. Context can be derived from a situational analysis, a media scan or a broader environmental scan.
- The **purposes** of the communication strategy. Sometimes these purposes are tightly held together by a small number of compelling threads woven throughout the statement of purposes. These threads should also be identified to provide the project with tools for basic "consistency checks", to ensure the purposes remain true to the driving threads or principles.
- The **target audiences** for the components of the strategy.

- The **key messages** to be directed to each target audience.

- The **major components** of the plan. These can be time-based (i.e. start-up, early "seed" communication, mid-stream communication, end-stage communication and post-engagement project communication) or they can be based on the purposes of the communication, or both (a time/purpose grid helps meld the approaches).

- The **tools to be used** in carrying out the plan, including selection of methods of delivery for each element in the messaging.

- The **resources needed** to use each tool and complete each major plan component.

- Approaches to **address reactions** from recipients of communication.

- A **plan for mid-course and end-state evaluation** of the communication strategy.

6.5 Elements of Good Communication

A number of elements characterize good communication. The importance of these elements is most crucial in *strategic* communication because the stakes are high. Flawed communication can ruin more than a single message: it can harm the entire communication strategy, and can damage the community engagement process that the communication strategy is meant to serve. Put positively, a good communication strategy can be a major contributor to the success of community engagement.

The Right Length, Breadth and Depth
Section 2.5 of this module discussed the concepts of length, breadth and depth in terms of a community engagement process and suggested that any or all of these dimensions might change as the engagement process unfolds.

Figure 8: Length, Breadth and Depth in Communication

L
E
N
G
T
H

This is about the duration of communication.

This is about how widely (in terms of people and groups) the communication is disseminated.

BREADTH

DEPTH

This is about how detailed and frequent the communication is.
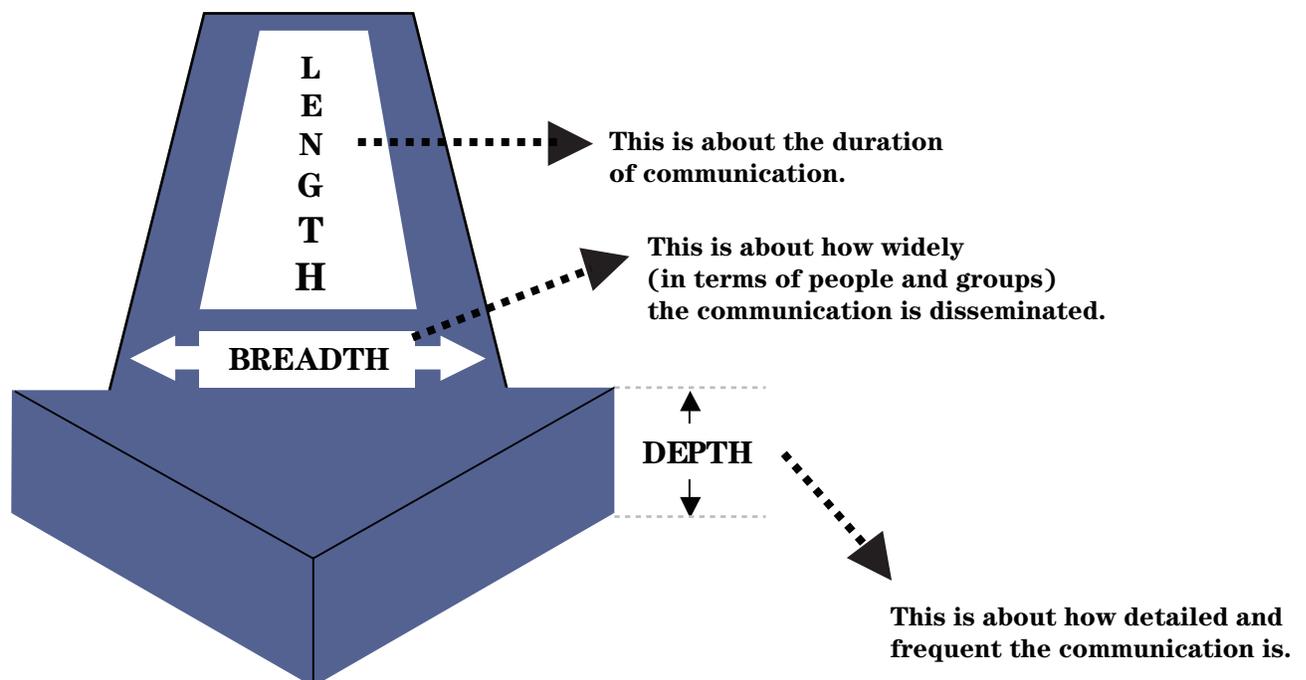
A similar three-dimensional paradigm makes sense for strategic communication as well.

Failure to get it right in terms of these three dimensions can seriously affect the success of the strategy. For example:

- In terms of **length**, some communication strategies start out with a flurry of messages that peter off as the project proceeds, making it easy for participants to assume that reduced communication amounts to reduced commitment to the project on the part of the communicator.
- In terms of **breadth**, some strategies leave out people, organizations and communities that are "at the border" (meaning those entities that are not core participants in engagement, but who might join if kept informed and enticed; or those entities that are not core participants but whose support will be needed so change can actually take place).
- In terms of **depth**, some communications are too simplistic (not the same as simple!), or are so complex that the recipients of messages don't bother to read them or are intimidated by them, or the communications are so infrequent that recipients lose a sense of the momentum of the project or process.

However, making adjustments to the length, depth and breadth of communications should be seen as an essential part of the communication process as it unfolds, mirroring changes in the length, breadth and depth of the community engagement process that the communication strategy is meant to serve.

Relevance

- Communication should be relevant. It should be perceived as something that touches on important matters in a way that makes sense in the language and life of the recipient. Too often, however, messages are couched in terms that are relevant to the sender rather than the recipient.

Example:

Consuela, who works for a major health service provider agency, is responsible for strategic communication related to a community engagement process involving people who are homeless.

Consuela believes strongly in the benefits of the engagement process from her agency's point of view, and writes a handout meant to be read by people who are homeless, asking them to become involved in the engagement by coming to a public meeting. Three quarters of the text is about the benefits of the engagement process for her agency *("enhanced case management," "best use of available resources," "outreach to the marginalized and disadvantaged").* Only one stilted sentence refers to benefits from the point of view of a person who is homeless *("The results of this engagement process will facilitate more rapid, relevant and appropriate access to primary care and ancillary services for populations who are homeless").*

Very few people who are homeless come to the meeting.

Clarity

Two kinds of clarity are essential in communication:

1. **stylistic clarity.** This involves plain language, short sentences, avoiding acronyms, using the active rather than the passive voice, and using pictures to illustrate points.
2. **message clarity.** This involves ensuring that the message is not wrapped in so many conditions, qualifiers and cooing words that the message gets lost in the wrapping. Recipients of such messages usually spot the message's fuzziness, and this erodes the recipient's confidence in the sender's honesty and frankness.

Fussing over the accuracy of a message can sometimes lead to a decline in clarity:

People in the town of Upper Rubber Boot formed a group to do something about the tragic death toll on local highways. Yanick, who works for a local health agency, has been asked to write a media release for the group. He gives it the title:

Community tackles driving deaths

But Yanick's boss reviews it and says, *"We can't use the football term 'tackle'. People will think we are only concerned about young males."*

So Yanick changes the title to read:
Community addresses driving deaths

But Yanick's boss's boss reviews it and says, *"We can't say 'driving' deaths. People will think it's only drivers, not passengers, that we care about."*

So Yanick changes the title to:
Community addresses vehicular deaths

But Yanick's boss reviews it and says, *"We can't say vehicular 'deaths'. After all, 'mortality' is a classier word."*

So Yanick changes the title to:
Community addresses vehicular mortality

But Yanick's boss's boss's assistant says, *"We can't say 'vehicular mortality'. It sounds like we are talking about the death of cars."*

So Yanick changes it to:
Community addresses vehicular-related mortality

But Yanick's boss says, *"We shouldn't say the community will 'address' the issue, since it must understand mortality before addressing it."*

So Yanick changes it to:
Community conceptualizes vehicular-related mortality

But Yanick's boss's boss says, *"It's not the whole community that's involved. It's families, ambulance folks and emergency departments – and they are concerned about injury too."*

So Yanick changes the title to:
Familial and direct service stakeholders conceptualize vehicular-related mortality and morbidity

But Yanick's co-communicator says, *"We can't forget other stakeholders who might be worried about this problem."*

So Yanick changes it to: **Familial as well as direct and indirect service stakeholders and collateral parties conceptualize vehicular-related mortality and morbidity**

But Yanick's boss says, *"This is an obscure title. I don't know what it means!"*

So Yanick changes it to:
Somebody will do something about something

Timeliness

Many of the messages delivered as part of a communication strategy are like articles in a newspaper – they are meant to be today's news, not yesterday's. The news may be notice of a meeting, a morale-building description of success, an urgent call for assistance or a warning about an impending project obstacle.

> "Teaching communication skills without also teaching communication strategy (i.e., the rationale) is like telling a joke and forgetting the punch line."
>
> J. David Pincus

Communicators hardly ever set out to create stale news, but staleness can creep in for at least two reasons:

- Communication has been given low priority within the engagement process, so those responsible for communicating do their communication work only after more "important" tasks have been completed.
- Communication has been given high priority within the engagement process – so high that everyone wants a crack at editing messages before they are transmitted, leading to delays.

The solution often lies in making timely communication a particularly high priority, and establishing a simple and clean approval process for the content of communications.

Accessibility (Multi-Layering)

People only receive, absorb and respond to communication when it is delivered in a way that is accessible to them. Accessibility had several dimensions:

- **Accessibility in terms of medium:** People are most able to access information when it is delivered in a medium they can use. For instance, the Internet is a medium many people can use, but those without knowledge of computer skills cannot access this medium. Similarly, a person who cannot read cannot access written communication.

> "For communications activities to be effective, they must walk a careful line between what a group has to say and what and how the audience wants, needs, and expects to hear the message. Unfortunately, civil society organisations often focus more on the former than the latter."
>
> Terri Willard, International Institute for Sustainable Development

As well, the medium must be perceived as friendly if it is to be accessible. A long written document with no table of contents, a website so graphics-rich that it takes ten minutes to load on-screen or a glossy twenty-page brochure rich in platitudes and poor in concrete content are all examples of "engineered unfriendliness," even if that was not the designer's intent.

- **Accessibility in terms of style:** Earlier, this module pointed out that plain language, avoidance of acronyms, use of short sentences and graphics are desirable elements of style in all communication. However, within these guidelines there can still be differing elements of style that relate to specific audiences – styles that attract specific audiences. For some audiences a businesslike or technical style is what attracts their attention. For others, a more emotive, humorous or rhetorical style will make them want to examine and absorb the message.

- **Accessibility in terms of content:** Different participants in a community engagement process may have different needs in terms of the type and depth of content they require before they will pay attention to the content. This often means providing different versions of a major communication, each version geared to a particular participant group.

Creating different versions does not mean dumbing down an initial "specialist" version. It means starting from scratch with each version, tailoring it to meet the needs and acceptance preferences of each audience (even when it borrows from a central pool of key messages).

- **Accessibility in terms of people with communication limitations:** People with disabilities sometimes have communication limitations that mean the traditional written or recorded word is not sufficient to allow them to gain access to communications. If communication intends to reach these audiences it must adopt alternate formats to reach them.

  The website of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (part of the Ministry of Community and Social Services) contains a section on alternative communication formats, found at http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/how/howto_information.htm.

Fostering Transparency

Community engagement processes usually founder when participants believe its organizers, or a clique within the process, have a hidden agenda.

Transparent, clear, timely and frequent communication is one antidote. This sounds easy to do but it can often pose difficulties, particularly when some of the communication, while necessary, is less than pleasant news.

Among the necessary but unpleasant bits of news in community engagement process, one sometimes finds the following:

- *"We have no idea if the powers-that-be will accept your findings. However, unless you generate these findings in the first place, there will be zero chance of influencing the powers."*
- *"So far this process has been great at identifying problems with the system, but not at identifying feasible solutions to these problems"*
- *"We are well behind our schedule and we don't think we can deliver a final product stemming from this process on time."*
- *"We underestimated the resources necessary to support this process, and we can't find any additional resources."*

- *"A major conflict has arisen among participants in the process, and if it is not resolved the process will likely fail."*
- *"A major political or policy change has taken place at a level above us, and therefore many of the premises on which this engagement process is based are no longer valid."*
- *"A major participant group was inadvertently excluded from the process at the beginning. We would like to include them now, but they are too mad at us to agree to participate."*

These sample messages are not cited to suggest that most communication in community engagement processes is doom-and-gloom. On the contrary, most messages and information-sharing are positive and are often a celebration of success. Nevertheless, failure to acknowledge bad news can overshadow all the good news.

Nor should bad news be delivered with a sense of helplessness. Rather, it should be delivered with addenda such as:

- *"This is how we propose to solve the problem. What do you think about our idea?"*
- *"We believe you as partners in this process can help arrive at a solution to this problem. Does anyone want to propose a solution?"*

6.6 Vehicles for Communication

The vast bulk of communication in a community engagement process will be the simple and richest communication – person-to-person or small group communication that is voice-to-voice and not mediated by paper or pixels.

However, there is obviously a place for use of more formal (and more plannable) vehicles for communication.

This module is not meant to describe these media in detail. However, the following graphic shows how the British government's Government Communication Network envisages the vehicles for delivering messages. While much of this is relevant to a formal political environment, the schematic shows what can be taken into account in what the Government Communication Network calls "integrating channels of communication".

6.7 Evaluating Communication

Evaluation of communication – both mid-stream (to allow corrections to the communication strategy and tactics) and end-state (to allow a determination of whether the strategy has worked) – is important.

Module 7 in this series (Assessment & Evaluation) provides insights into evaluation that can be applied to strategic communications as well as to community engagement.

The government of the United Kingdom is one jurisdiction that has developed a thorough approach to evaluating communication. Its Government Communication Network has identified nine key principles for communication evaluation:

1. Evaluation is an integral part of all communications projects, not an optional extra.

Figure 9: UK Government's Message Delivery Model

Platforms
ministerial speeches, conferences etc.

Broadcast
TV, radio

The Lobby

Press
local, national, digital, trade

Opinion formers
commentators, partners

Call Centres

Word of Mouth

Correspondence
letters, e-mails etc.

Government Assets
outdoor sites, buildings etc.

Staff Communication

Point of Delivery
people delivered, including Government & Partners & Intermediaries e.g. outreach, community leaders

NEWS

PAID FOR

HOW WE CAN REACH OUR TARGET

DIRECT CONTACT

NOT PAID FOR

Direct and Relationship Marketing

Broadcast, TV, Press, Outdoor, Radio

Events

Publications

Digital, Online, TV, e-Marketing

Public Relations

Publications

Social & Community Networks

Broadcast Editorial

Family and Friends

Digital

Public Relations

Events

Sponsorship and Partnerships

Co-branding

Direct Marketing

Source: UK Government Communication Network

2. Plan your evaluation at the start of a communications project, don't just leave it until the end; allow time for design and production of publicity material to be evaluated in research, if appropriate.

3. Set appropriate objectives. If your objectives are unclear, misdirected, or simply unachievable, this will obviously affect the evaluation.

4. Evaluation must be properly budgeted for, as a rule of thumb, 10 percent of a project's budget should be allocated to evaluation.

5. All projects need to be evaluated – even small ones – and the scale of evaluation should match the scale of the project. You should not spend the same amount of money evaluating a £500 activity as you would on a £1 million project!

6. Be imaginative and use every occasion to listen. Evaluation is about gauging the success of initiatives, so why not ask people directly? For instance, structured questionnaires for stakeholders and small web-based surveys can be useful and cost-effective measures of how your initiative is performing.

> Be imaginative and use every occasion to listen. Evaluation is about gauging the success of initiatives, so why not ask people directly?

7. A good test of the usefulness of an evaluation is to ask the following questions:

   - Does it effectively identify the success or failure of the project?
   - Does it effectively identify the reasons for the success or failure of the project?
   - Does it effectively gauge the cost-effectiveness of the project?

8. Ensure your own research department supports your work and adds credibility when you report findings internally.

9. It is important to ensure that any quantitative or tracking research is based on a statistically robust sample of the target audience to ensure representativeness and reliability. The reader can find guidance on appropriate sample sizes from research agencies or specialists in research planning, such as COI Research Unit or statistical teams within departments.

6.8 Ten Random Tips for Effective Communication

1. Always thank others before you congratulate yourself.

2. Be sure each message has a beginning (an introduction), a middle, and an end or conclusion – don't leave the recipients guessing about why you are taking up their time, or what you want them to do with the message's content.

3. If you produce a document with pretty little pictures and text with colours-on-colours, try printing it from your computer and then copy it using a low-grade photocopier. If what comes out can't be read, throw it away and start re-drawing your pictures.

4. If you expect someone to listen to you, make them feel at ease by first of all listening to them.

5. Remember – the Web is crammed with documents that are undated and apparently unauthored. Don't add to the jumble – tell your Web readers who it is who wrote a Web document, and when.

6. The quietest person in the room just might be the one with the most wisdom to share – with encouragement.

7. If you have a choice between showing your readers or listeners that you are brilliant and showing them that you are honest – show them that you are honest.

8. Credibility is not a quality of good strategic communication – it is a result of good communication.

9. You are your own worst editor.

10. Two million years ago one of our ancestors tried to convince some fellow proto-humans to work together to hunt antelopes. This was the first community engagement project. Use the same tools as our ancestors did (promising a share of the meat works better than waving a club).

11. Never add an eleventh tip if you have told people you will only give them ten.

Community engagement looks complex on the surface, partly because of the welter of differing definitions of community and of engagement, the different ways people drawn from communities can interact with an engagement process, and the substantial array of tools available for community engagement.

But the process of community engagement becomes simpler if its purposes are clear, if it is well planned, if the tools are chosen to fit the unique needs of each engagement process, and if it is supported by a communication strategy that values clarity, timeliness, relevance and accessibility.

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Appendix A:

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

The following explanations of the rungs on Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation are excerpted from Arnstein, SR. A Ladder of Citizen Participation *Journal of the American Institute of Planning.* 35(4)

1. Manipulation:

"In the name of citizen participation, people are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards for the express purpose of "educating" them or engineering their support. Instead of genuine citizen participation, the bottom rung of the ladder signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by powerholders."

2. Therapy:

"In some respects group therapy, masked as citizen participation, should be on the lowest rung of the ladder because it is both dishonest and arrogant. Its administrators - mental health experts from social workers to psychiatrists - assume that powerlessness is synonymous with mental illness. On this assumption, under a masquerade of involving citizens in planning, the experts subject the citizens to clinical group therapy. What makes this form of 'participation' so invidious is that citizens are engaged in extensive activity, but the focus of it is on curing them of their 'pathology' rather than changing the racism and victimization that create their 'pathologies.'"

3. Informing:

"Informing citizens of their rights, responsibilities, and options can be the most important first step toward legitimate citizen participation. However, too frequently the emphasis is placed on a one-way flow of information - from officials to citizens - with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation. Under these conditions, particularly when information is provided at a late stage in planning, people have little opportunity to influence the program designed 'for their benefit.' The most frequent tools used for such one-way communication are the news media, pamphlets, posters, and responses to inquiries. Meetings can also be turned into vehicles for one-way communication by the simple device of providing superficial information, discouraging questions, or giving irrelevant answers."

4. Consultation:

"Inviting citizens' opinions, like informing them, can be a legitimate step toward their full participation. But if consulting them is not combined with other modes of participation, this rung of the ladder is still a sham since it offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account. The most frequent methods used for consulting people are attitude surveys, neighborhood meetings, and public hearings. When powerholders restrict the input of citizens' ideas solely to this level, participation remains just a window-dressing ritual. People are primarily perceived as statistical abstractions, and participation is measured by how many come to meetings, take brochures home, or answer a questionnaire. What citizens achieve in all this activity is that they have 'participated in participation.' And what powerholders achieve is the evidence that they have gone through the required motions of involving 'those people.'"

5. Placation:

"It is at this level that citizens begin to have some degree of influence though tokenism is still apparent. An example of placation strategy is to place a few hand-picked 'worthy' poor on boards of Community Action Agencies or on public bodies like the board of education, police commission, or housing authority. If they are not accountable to a constituency in the community and if the traditional power elite hold the majority of seats, the have-nots can be easily outvoted and outfoxed."

6. Partnership:

"At this rung of the ladder, power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and powerholders. They agree to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as joint policy boards, planning committees and mechanisms for resolving impasses. After the groundrules have been established through some form of give-and-take, they are not subject to unilateral change. Partnership can work most effectively when there is an organized power-base in the community to which the citizen leaders are account-able; when the

citizens group has the financial resources to pay its leaders reasonable honoraria for their time-consuming efforts; and when the group has the resources to hire (and fire) its own technicians, lawyers, and community organizers. With these ingredients, citizens have some genuine bargaining influence over the outcome of the plan (as long as both parties find it useful to maintain the partnership)."

7. Delegated Power:

"Negotiations between citizens and public officials can also result in citizens achieving dominant decision-making authority over a particular plan or program. Model City policy boards or CAA delegate agencies on which citizens have a clear majority of seats and genuine specified powers are typical examples. At this level, the ladder has been scaled to the point where citizens hold the significant cards to assure accountability of the program to them. To resolve differences, powerholders need to start the bargaining process rather than respond to pressure from the other end… Another model of delegated power is separate and parallel groups of citizens and power-holders, with provision for citizen veto if differences of opinion cannot be resolved through negotiation. This is a particularly interesting coexistence model for hostile citizen groups too embittered toward city hall – as a result of past 'collaborative efforts' - to engage in joint planning."

8. Citizen Control:

"Demands for community controlled schools, black control, and neighborhood control are on the increase. Though no one in the nation has absolute control, it is very important that the rhetoric not be confused with intent. People are simply demanding that degree of power (or control) which guarantees that participants or residents can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which 'outsiders' may change them… Among the arguments against community control are: it supports separatism; it creates balkanization of public services; it is more costly and less efficient; it enables minority group "hustlers" to be just as opportunistic and disdainful of the have-nots as their white predecessors; it is incompatible with merit systems and professionalism; and ironically enough, it can turn out to be a new Mickey Mouse game for the have-nots by allowing them to gain control but not allowing them sufficient dollar resources to succeed. These arguments are not to be taken lightly. But neither can we take lightly the arguments of embittered advocates of community control - that every other means of trying to end their victimization has failed!"

Appendix B:
Examples Of Community Engagement Principles

The Centers for Disease Control example (United States)

The Centres for Disease Control/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry Committee for Community Engagement identifies nine principles for community engagement, grouped into three headings:

Before starting a community engagement effort . . .

1. Be clear about the purposes or goals of the engagement effort, and the populations and/or communities you want to engage.

2. Become knowledgeable about the community in terms of its economic conditions, political structures, norms and values, demographic trends, history, and experience with engagement efforts. Learn about the community's perceptions of those initiating the engagement activities.

For engagement to occur, it is necessary to . . .

3. Go into the community, establish relationships, build trust, work with the formal and informal leadership, and seek commitment from community organizations and leaders to create processes for mobilizing the community.

4. Remember and accept that community self-determination is the responsibility and right of all people who comprise a community. No external entity should assume it can bestow on a community the power to act in its own self-interest.

For engagement to succeed . . .

5. Partnering with the community is necessary to create change and improve health.

6. All aspects of community engagement must recognize and respect community diversity. Awareness of the various cultures of a community and other factors of diversity must be paramount in designing and implementing community engagement approaches.

7. Community engagement can only be sustained by identifying and mobilizing community assets, and by developing capacities and resources for community health decisions and action.

8. An engaging organization or individual change agent must be prepared to release control of actions or interventions to the community, and be flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the community.

9. Community collaboration requires long-term commitment by the engaging organization and its partners.

The New South Wales example (Australia)

The seminal document *Community Consultation: A discussion on principles and procedures for making consultation work*, published by the New South Wales Department of Urban Affairs and Planning in February 2001, put forward ten principles for community consultation:

1. Make it timely

Participation should not be so late in the life of an issue that it is tokenistic, or merely confirms decisions already made. The timing should occur when citizens have the best chance of influencing outcomes. Give people enough time to express their views.

2. Make it inclusive

Participants should be selected in a way that is not open to manipulation, and should include a cross-section of the population — as individuals and as groups. Random selection offers the best chance of achieving this.

3. Make it community-focussed

Ask participants not what they want personally or what is in their self-interest, but what they consider appropriate in their role as citizens.

4. Make it interactive and deliberative

Avoid reducing questions to a simplistic either/or response. Allow consideration of the big picture, so people can really become engaged.

5. Make it effective

Although decision-making can strive for consensus, complete agreement need not be the outcome. Be clear on how the decisions will be made so that participants know and understand the impact of their involvement. Make sure all participants have time to become well-informed about and to understand material they are unlikely to have had a prior familiarity with.

6. Make it matter

It is important that there is a strong likelihood that any recommendations which emerge from the consultative process will be adopted. If they are not, it is important that a public explanation is provided. Faith in the process is important by both the power holders and the participants.

7. Make it well-facilitated

It is important that all participants control the agenda and content because this will give the process more credibility. An independent, skilled and flexible facilitator with no vested interest is essential in order to achieve this.

8. Make it open, fair and subject to evaluation

The consultation method should be appropriate to the target group. Evaluation questions should be formulated in advance. Decide how the 'success' of the consultation will be measured. Include factors beyond the adoption of recommendations. Feedback to the community after consultation is over is essential.

9. Make it cost effective

It is difficult to measure community satisfaction, or savings in costly litigation that could arise in the absence of consultation and participation. However, factors can be considered including how many and which types of community members should be consulted on a given issue. Some questions will require broader consultation, others more targeted consultation. Costs will vary and are adaptable, but the process selected must be properly resourced.

10. Make it flexible

A variety of consultation mechanisms exist. Choose the one which best suits the circumstances. Try a variety of mechanisms over time. Think how to reach all your users, including those with special needs (e.g. language, disabilities, the elderly, the young). Different communities and different questions will produce better responses with different forms of consultation. Mix qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority example (British Columbia)

The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority's *Framework for Community Engagement* (October 2003) puts forward ten principles for community engagement:

1. Transparency of purpose, of goals, of accountabilities, of commitments, of expectations, and of constraints
2. Level and method of engagement based on appropriateness to the purpose
3. Clear, accessible, sufficient communication and information for involvement with issues and decision-making
4. Engagement in the process at the earliest point possible
5. Timelines realistic for the level of engagement appropriate to the situation and respectful of the communities with whom we engage
6. Engagement of the full diversity of communities impacted by the purpose, by the process, and by the outcomes
7. Supports for "hard-to-reach" and/or marginalized communities to participate
8. Transparency of how engagement will impact and be used in decision-making
9. Responsiveness of decision-makers to community engagement
10. Evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of community engagement.

The Queensland Government Example (Australia)

The Queensland Government Department of Emergency Services has developed a *Charter for Community Engagement* that cites five principles for community engagement:

1. **Inclusiveness** – connecting with those who are hardest to reach
2. **Reaching out** – changing the ways government and the community work together
3. **Mutual respect** – listening, understanding and acting on experience different from our own
4. **Integrity** – engagement as a means of promoting integrity in the democratic processes of government
5. **Affirming diversity** – changing the processes of government to incorporate diverse values and interests.

Appendix C:

Evaluating Community Engagement: Scotland's and Queensland's Indicators

The Scottish Experience

Communities Scotland, a department of the Scottish Executive (the regional government for Scotland) has published *National Standards for Community Engagement* outlining nine standards for community engagement and indicators for each standard. The full document is found at http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/lccs_008411.pdf

A. The Support Standard: We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement

Indicators of the Support Standard:

1. The participants identify what support each representative needs in order to participate

2. There are no practical barriers to participants in community engagement. Where needed, they have:
   - suitable transport
   - care of dependants
   - general assistance
   - personal assistants
   - access to premises
   - communication aids (such as loop systems, interpreting, advocacy)
   - meetings organised at appropriate times
   - co-operation of employers

3. There are no financial barriers to participants in community engagement including:
   - out of pocket expenses
   - loss of earnings
   - suitable transport
   - care of dependents
   - personal assistants

   - communication aids (such as loop systems, interpreting, advocates)
   - timing of meetings

4. Community and agency representatives have access to the equipment they need (for example computers, a telephone, photocopying)

5. Impartial professional community development support is available for groups involved in community engagement

6. Specialist professional advice is available to groups involved in community engagement

B. The Planning Standard: We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken

Indicators of the Planning Standard:

1. All participants are involved from the start in:

   a) identifying and defining the issues that the engagement should address, and the options for how to tackle them

   b) choosing the methods of engagement that will be used (see Methods standard)

2. Participants express views openly and honestly

3. Participants agree on the amount of time to be allocated to the process of agreeing on the purpose(s) of the engagement

4. The purpose of the engagement is identified and stated, there is evidence that it is needed, and the purpose is agreed by all participants and communicated to the wider community and agencies that may be affected

5. Public policies that affect the engagement are explained to the satisfaction of participants and the wider community

6. Participants identify existing and potential resources which are available to the engagement process and which may help achieve its purpose(s) (for example, money, people, equipment)

7. Intended results, that are specific, measurable and realistic, are agreed to and recorded

8. The participants assess the constraints, challenges and opportunities that will be involved in implementing the plan

9. The participants agree on the timescales for the achievement of the purpose(s)

10. The participants agree on and clarify their respective roles and responsibilities in achieving the purpose(s)

11. Plans are reviewed and adjusted in the light of evaluation of performance (see Monitoring and evaluation standard)

C. The Methods Standard: We will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for the purpose

Indicators for the Methods Standard:

1. The range of methods used is:
   - acceptable to the participants
   - suitable for all their needs and their circumstances
   - appropriate for the purposes of the engagement

2. Methods used identify, involve and support excluded groups

3. Methods are chosen to enable diverse views to be expressed, and to help resolve any conflicts of interest

4. Methods are fully explained and applied with the understanding and agreement of all participants

5. Methods are evaluated and adapted in response to feedback

D. The Working Together Standard: We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently

Indicators for the Working Together Standard:

The participants:

1. Behave openly and honestly – there are no hidden agendas, but participants also respect confidentiality

2. Behave towards one another in a positive, respectful and non-discriminatory manner

3. Recognise participants' time is valuable and that they may have other commitments

4. Recognise existing agency and community obligations, including statutory requirements

5. Encourage openness and the ability for everyone to take part by:
   - communicating with one another using plain language
   - ensuring that all participants are given equal opportunity to engage and have their knowledge and views taken into account when taking decisions
   - seeking, listening to and reflecting on the views of different individuals and organisations, taking account of minority views
   - removing barriers to participation

6. Take decisions on the basis of agreed procedures and shared knowledge

7. Identify and discuss opportunities and strategies for achieving change, ensuring that:
   - key points are summarised, agreed and progressed
   - conflicts are recognised and addressed

8. Manage change effectively by:
   - focusing on agreed purpose
   - clarifying roles and who is responsible for agreed actions
   - delegating actions to those best equipped to carry them out
   - ensuring participants are clear about the decisions that need to be made
   - ensuring that, where necessary, all parties have time to consult with those they represent
   - co-ordinating skills
   - enhancing skills where necessary
   - agreeing on schedules
   - assessing risks
   - addressing conflicts
   - monitoring and evaluating progress
   - learning from one another
   - seeking continuous improvement in how things are done

9. Use resources efficiently, effectively and fairly

10. Support the process with administrative arrangements that enable it to work

> *E. The Sharing Information Standard:* We will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants

Indicators for the Sharing Information Standard:

1. Information relevant to the engagement is shared between all participants

2. Information is accessible, clear, understandable and relevant, with key points summarised

3. Information is made available in appropriate formats for participants

4. Information is made available in time to enable people to fully take part and consult others

5. All participants identify and explain when they are bound by confidentiality and why access to such information is restricted

6. Within the limits of confidentiality, all participants have equal access to all information that is relevant to the engagement

> *F. The Working With Others Standard:* We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement

Indicators for the Working with Others Standard:

The participants in the engagement:

1. Identify other structures, organisations and activities that are relevant to their work

2. Establish and maintain effective links with such other structures, activities and organisations

3. Learn about these structures, activities and organisations, to avoid duplication of their work and complement it wherever possible

4. Learn from others and seek improvement in practice

5. Encourage effective community engagement as normal practice

G. The Improvement Standard: We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants

Indicators for the Improvement Standard:

1. All those involved in the engagement process are committed to making the most of the understanding and competence of both community and agency participants

2. All participants have access to support and to opportunities for training or reflection on their experiences, to enable them and others to take part in an effective, fair and inclusive way

3. Each party identifies its own learning and development needs and together the participants regularly review their capacity to play their roles

4. Where needs are identified, the potential of participants is developed and promoted

5. The competence and understanding of the engagement system as a whole is regularly evaluated by the participants as it develops

6. Resources, including independent professional support, are available to make the most of the competence and understanding of individual participants and the engagement system as a whole

7. There is adequate time for competence and understanding to be developed

8. Methods used to improve competence and understanding reflect diverse needs and are fit for purpose

9. Participants share their skills, experience and knowledge with community and agency colleagues

H. The Feedback Standard: We will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected

Indicators for the Feedback Standard:

1. Organisers of community engagement regularly feed back, to all those affected, the options that have been considered and the decisions and actions that have been agreed. This is done within an agreed time, to an agreed format and from an identified source

2. Feedback on the outcomes and impact of these decisions and actions is provided regularly to communities and organisations within an agreed time, to an agreed format and from an identified source

3. Explanations about why decisions and actions have been taken are shared along with details of any future activity

4. The characteristics of the audience are identified to ensure that:
   - relevant information is provided in understandable languages
   - relevant information is provided in appropriate languages
   - a suitable range of media and communication channels is used constructively

5. Information includes details about opportunities for involvement in community engagement and encourages positive contributions from groups and individuals in the community

6. Information promotes positive images of all population groups in the community and avoids stereotypes

I. The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard:
We will monitor and evaluate whether the
engagement achieves its purposes and meets the
national standards for community engagement

*Indicators for the Monitoring and Evaluation
Standard:*

1. The engagement process and its effects are
   continually evaluated to measure progress, develop
   skills and refine practices

2. Progress is evaluated against the intended results
   and other changes identified by the participants (see
   Planning standard indicator 7)

3. The participants agree what information needs to be
   collected, how, when and by whom, to understand
   the situation both at the start of the engagement and
   as it progresses

4. Appropriate participants collect and record this
   information

5. The information is presented accurately and in a way
   that is easy to use

6. The participants agree on the lessons to be drawn
   from the evidence of the results and the changes that
   occurred

7. The participants act on the lessons learned

8. Progress is celebrated

9. The results of the evaluation are fed back to the
   participants and the wider community

10. Evidence of good practice is recorded and shared
    with other agencies and communities

Queensland's Experience

The Australian State of Queensland has been a leader in
community engagement. Among the tools it has
developed to support this priority is a *Community
Engagement Evaluation Strategy* found at
http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledg
e/evaluation/strategy/documents/pdf/CEDevaluationstra
tegy.pdf. This strategy describes three kinds of
evaluation:

- Evaluation as part of performance monitoring and
  reporting (summative evaluation) to report on
  achievements, increase accountability, and track
  progress.
- Evaluation as part of project management and
  development (formative evaluation) which differs
  from summative evaluation in that the purpose of
  evaluation is not about reporting on performance
  to ensure accountability but rather to integrate
  learning and continuous improvement into the
  community engagement project/ program/ policy
  cycle.
- Evaluation as part of developing a shared evidence
  and knowledge base.

The strategy points to the need to evaluate community
engagement at three levels:

1. The micro-level (the level of an engagement project
   or program)

2. The macro-level (the level of a division or
   department within the State government)

3. The mega-level (the level of the whole government of
   Queensland).

For each level the strategy identifies examples of objective and subjective indicators that can be used in evaluation:

Level of evaluation	Objective measures/indicators (quantity)	Subjective measures/indicators (quality)
1. **the micro-level** (the level of an engagement project or program)	• The number of people who attended the activity • The demographic distribution of people that attended the activity • The number of information resources distributed	• Participants' satisfaction with the facilitation of the activity • Participants' satisfaction with their opportunity to express their opinions and proposals • How much participants felt they gained from the activity • How decision-makers felt that feedback from the public affected the project/program outcomes
2. **the macro-level** (the level of a division or department of government)	• The total number of opportunities for involvement • The total number of information resources distributed	• Stakeholders' satisfaction with the quality of activities • Stakeholders' reported learning from activities • Customer (government/ non-government) satisfaction with community engagement advice • Evidence of new beneficial relationships and partnerships between community and government department
3. **the mega-level** (the level of the whole government of Queensland)	• Percentage of population participating in individual and collective social and civic activities • Changes to whole of government systems, infrastructure, and resources for community engagement • Numbers of opportunities to participate	• Knowledge of how to become involved with government • Perception of confidence in government • Personal knowledge of links to government and other significant institutions (evidence of linking social capital) • % of the population who consider they have adequate opportunity to participate in government decision-making

The Queensland Government has also produced a manual on evaluation of community engagement entitled Engaging Queenslanders: Evaluating community engagement, found at http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/resources/documents/pdf/guide_evaluation.pdf. The Queensland Government also hosts a website, Get Involved, that provides access to a number of community engagement resources (see http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au).

Notes

Ontario