From Chaos to Collaboration
Bridging the Gap Between Constituents and Legislatures

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Who is this guy?

- Father of two, husband of one
- Manager, Public Engagement Division, City of Austin
- Consultant to outside clients, including cities of San Antonio, Fort Worth, and Fort Lauderdale; state agencies; nonprofits; and religious organizations
- Public Engagement Trainer to professionals from cities, state agencies, and nonprofits nationwide; SMU faculty
- Former president of International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
- Leadership Council, Association for Conflict Resolution Environment and Public Policy Section; American Bar Assoc. Public Policy and Consensus Committee
- M.S. in Conflict Resolution, PhD forthcoming
- Jazz pianist, Marathoner
I’m Shameless!

“I don’t have the power now, but I don’t want it anyhow, so I gotta let it go…”

“Thought I’d never compromise...oh, but you convinced me otherwise...”
“I don’t have the power now, but I don’t want it anyhow, so I gotta let it go…”

- Whether you give the public the “bully pulpit” or not, they can already “bully” their way onto the “pulpit”

- They’ll influence the process one way or the other; we might as well engage them proactively, thoughtfully, inclusively, and fairly
“Thought I’d never compromise...oh, but you convinced me otherwise...”

Public policy conflict resolution processes provide a forum to transform discourse and problem solving.

Citizens engaged in public disputes can have:
  - Entrenched positions
  - Feelings of hostility toward other groups and viewpoints

A well-convened process enables:
  - Civil dialogue
  - Possible collaboration
  - Win-win solutions based on underlying interests
The “Public” in Public Policy

- Find ways to reach **all** affected stakeholders
- Especially hard to reach:
  - Seniors
  - Disabled
  - Limited-English speakers
  - Youth
  - Low-income
- Create a sustained **culture** of collaboration
Conditions for Civic Fusion

- Parties agree status quo is unsustainable and none of the parties have enough power or knowledge to act unilaterally to solve the problem.
- Past efforts to solve problem failed.
- People need a forum within which to surface and acknowledge deep differences and jointly build an agreement that encompasses these differences.
Changing Views

Customer
- Allows others to define needs and choices
- Consumers, not creators
- Thinks in terms of I/Me
- Wants services without bearing costs

Citizen
- Accountable
- Committed
- Determines the future
- Exercises ownership
- Acknowledges that change comes through citizens
Benefits and Challenges

**Benefits**
- Decisions are more:
  - Credible
  - Durable
  - Creative
  - Legitimate
- Speeds program implementation
- Informs the public
- Provides opportunities for community building

**Challenges**
- Decision-making process can be:
  - Longer
  - More expensive
  - More complex
- 75% of surveyed members of the public say engaging citizens through local planning is **essential** to economic recovery and job creation.  
  American Planning Association

- 81% of municipal officials report that their cities use public engagement process often or sometimes.  
  National League of Cities
Shifting Paradigm

“In the end, this fundamental shift will lead to more effective leadership, stronger communities, and a more meaningful relationship between citizens and their government.”  

National Conference on Citizenship

Democracy Pays: How Democratic Engagement Can Cut the Cost of Government  

The Democratic Society

- Better information on citizen needs/attitudes to target cuts and spending
- Closer oversight and better understanding of council business reducing costs and increasing tax morale
- Savings or higher revenues from stronger economic development and greater “civic productivity”

(the extent to which networks of citizens support themselves without public service involvement)
Making the Case for Public Engagement

Benefits for consumers include:

▪ Services that respond to and better meet their needs;
▪ Are delivered in ways that suit them and not the provider; and
▪ Improved outcomes

Effective engagement benefits decision-makers/providers when:

▪ Consumers become better informed and more motivated to get involved and support ideas because they have influence over the agenda;
▪ Those better informed consumers become more likely to lead a drive for better quality engagement, which will in turn support efforts to improve engagement.

*This “virtuous circle” will be valuable in defending engagement programs from sceptics and others who undervalue such activities, particularly during a period of increasing pressure on budgets*
Legalizing Public Participation

- Current outdated “requirements” set everyone up for disappointment and miscommunication
- New templates available for creating positive shifts in public participation policy
- Collaborative effort among:
  - American Bar Association
  - International Municipal Lawyers Association
  - National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation
  - National Civic League
  - National League of Cities
  - International City/County Management Association
Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation

Public Participation:

- Is based on the belief that *those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process*
- Includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision
- Promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers
- **Seeks input from participants in designing how they participate**
- Provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way
- Communicates to participants how their input affected the decision
Why Adopt Engagement Principles?

- To help build **consistency** in our engagement planning and execution
- To ensure that our employees and contractors understand our **core values** relative to engagement
- To demonstrate to the public the value we place on engagement and what they can expect from us – and hold us **accountable** to
City of Austin Principles

Accountability and Transparency

- The City will enable the public to participate in decision-making processes by providing clear information on the issues, the ways to participate, and how their participation contributes to the decision.

Fairness and Respect

- The City will maintain a safe environment that cultivates and supports respectful public engagement and will expect participants to do so in turn.
Accessibility

- The City will respect and encourage participation by providing ample public notice of opportunities and resources and accommodations that enable all to participate.

Predictability and Consistency

- The City will prepare the public to participate by providing meeting agendas, discussion guidelines, notes, and information on next steps.
City of Austin Principles

Creativity and Community Collaboration
• The City will use innovative, proven, and customized engagement solutions that are appropriate to the needs of the projects and participants

Responsible Stewardship
• The City will balance its commitment to provide ample opportunities for public involvement with its commitment to delivering government services efficiently and using City resources wisely
Valuing Participation

- Information will be **thoughtfully considered**
- Participation will **impact** results/make a difference/influence results; “authentic intent”
- Participation process should be **meaningful** and **genuine**
“Invoke multiple forms of knowing”

- Value information from the “interplay of stories (with their full emotional content), facts, principles, reason, intuition, imagination, inspiration, and compassion/empathy”
- Civil and respectful tone
Inclusivity and Diversity

- Recognize and consider all voice and needs (including decision-makers)
- Engage in necessary outreach to make sure participation reflects diversity of city (regarding race, age, opinion, etc.)
- Engage in outreach to facilitate participation of affected groups/stakeholders
- Strive for inclusive decisions and processes; use “creative inclusion of perspectives...to produce wisdom”
“Respect and encourage participation” by making city communication and process **easily understood** and **accessible**, and **provide necessary information** (including “reasonable” tech data) at the right times.
Promote Dialogue, Deliberation, Discussion, and Listening

- Create **high quality dialogue** that promotes **learning**
- High quality dialogues deepen understanding, build relationships, and expand possibilities
- Give **priority** to participant discussions/opportunities for deliberation and dialogue
- Listen and help others be listened to
- Process should address agreement on facts and “varied opinions and values regarding the outcome of the process”
Timing and Responsiveness

- Involve citizens early
- Continuous involvement of citizens throughout process
- Consider information in a **timely** manner and allow **enough time** for a meaningful participation process
- “Open access to decision-making processes prior to closure
Tailor and Evaluate Process

- “Think **creatively** and plan **wisely**, using citizen involvement processes and **techniques to best fit the goals of the particular project**”

- Participants should help **design** and **alter** participation processes
Build Credibility of and Belief in the Process

- Communicate results and how participation affected that decision in order to **empower citizens**
- Processes should be **transparent** and **recorded**
- Build creditability with policy makers; must have diverse and representative participant base to do so
- "**Demonstrate Public Consensus**: [The process] must produce information that clearly highlights the public’s shared priorities"
Promote **ongoing education** of citizens and city staff in participation process.

Create a **culture of participation and ongoing participatory process**.

Provide **financial and tech support** to neighborhood groups, the primary avenue for civic participation.

Work actively to **enhance leadership capacity** of community members, leaders, and groups.
Careful planning and preparation should serve a **defined purpose** and **address needs** of the community that are clear to that community.

- Ensure appropriate resources are allocated and used effectively.
- Make sure staff involved are properly trained.
# IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public’s role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORM</th>
<th>CONSULT</th>
<th>INVOLVE</th>
<th>COLLABORATE</th>
<th>EMPOWER</th>
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<tr>
<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
<td>To place final decision making in the hands of the public.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC</td>
<td>We will keep you informed.</td>
<td>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.</td>
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Key *Design* Questions for Organizing Engagement

1. What are its purposes?

2. How will we manage the process?

3. How will we evaluate its outcomes?

Source: Kathy Quick, University of Minnesota
1. What are the Purposes of this Engagement Effort?

- Meet legal mandates
- Embody or enact the ideals of democracy
- Engage participants to represent or discover public interest
- Learn: enable better understanding of problems and options
  - Perhaps generate new solutions
- Share information
- Manage conflict and resolve disputes
- Limit delays, mistakes, and lawsuits
- Produce greater support for the processes and outcomes
- Build relationships, social capital, and trust for ongoing work

Source: Kathy Quick, University of Minnesota

Facilitating Civic Dialogue and Consensus
2a. Can We Move Beyond “Participation as Input?”

- **Participatory**: provide input on proposed project or policy
- **Deliberative**: engage in multi-directional dialogue about policy options
- **Collaborative**: coordinate to implement the decisions on an ongoing basis
- **Adaptive**: continually evaluate and adjust their goals and actions
- **Inclusive**: codefine issue and engagement process; connect across issues, perspectives, and time

Facilitating Civic Dialogue and Consensus

Source: Kathy Quick, University of Minnesota
Where Do You Map Your Process?

Highly Participatory Processes:

▪ Oriented to **input**

▪ Many are invited to and/or do participate

▪ Efforts are made to make the process broadly accessible

▪ Community input is collected and it influences decisions

Highly Inclusive Processes:

▪ Oriented to **building ongoing capacity**

▪ Multiple ways of knowing are engaged

▪ Participants coproduce the process and content of decision-making

▪ Connections over time and among issues are sustained

Source: Kathy Quick, University of Minnesota
2b. What Resources Do We Have and/or Need?

- Action
  - Budget Survey

- Resources
  - Community Anger
    - (Objective information)

- Frameworks
  - Representative Democracy
  - Us v. Them
  - Re-engagement
    - (Technocratic neutrality)

Facilitating Civic Dialogue and Consensus

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life

The University of Texas at Austin
3. How Will We Evaluate the Effort?

What are the goals and accountability measures for the public participation effort?

- Individual, group, and community level outcomes (e.g. individual and group learning)

- Process-oriented outcomes (e.g. incorporating diverse stakeholders)

- Content-oriented outcomes (e.g. improving environmental participation)

- User-oriented outcomes (e.g. participants’ satisfaction with process)

- First-, second-, and third-order outcome: immediate impacts, impacts once collaboration is underway and long term impacts

Source: Kathy Quick, University of Minnesota
Elements of High Quality Processes

• Finding sound, unbiased information
• Identifying a community’s underlying values
• Determining a variety of viable solutions
• Evaluating the pluses and minuses of each solution
• Making the best decision possible

Use a Process Appropriate to Your Needs

Communication and Consultation
- Providing and collecting information
- Airing issues, defining scopes

Consensus
- Agreement leading to decision-making and policy recommendations
Assessment

- Product/Intended Outcome
- Complementary Goals
- Stakeholders/Interested Parties/Required Participants
- Representative of Parties
- Issues
- Relevant History and Dynamics
- Info Needs
- Outreach/Consultation Requirements
- Time and Resource Constraints
- Likelihood of Reaching Consensus
- Feasibility of Convening Negotiations

Keys to Success

Identification of stakeholders, pre-existing issues, power imbalances, community spaces

- Accessibility and convenience to process and relevant information, transparency
- Understanding and knowledge of process
- Diversity of times for meetings
- Unique and enticing ways to engage people (online, face-to-face, door-to-door, in familiar surroundings)
- Communication/publicity across multiple media
- Opportunities to participate from very beginning
- Framing the issues in an engaging way
Questions?

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