

# Decision-Making 2.0: Improving Outcomes with Citizen Engagement

2015 Elected Officials Seminar Series



## What is public consultation/citizen engagement?

- "... public's **input** on matters affecting them is sought. Its main goals are in improving the efficiency, transparency and public involvement in large-scale projects or laws and policies."

*"Any process that involves the public in problem solving or decision making and uses public input to make decisions."*

[www.IAP2.org](http://www.IAP2.org)

- **Notification** - to **publicize** the matter to be consulted on
- **Consultation** - a **two-way** flow of information and opinion exchange
- **Participation** - **involving** interest groups in the drafting of policy or legislation

(Wikipedia)



### Two key principles:

- Put yourself in their shoes. Look at it from others' point of view
- Listen

## Why is it necessary?

- Effective decision
- Issues management
- Influences outcomes
- Reputation management
- Public demand
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Beware of DAD!**

- **Decide**
- **Announce and**
- **Defend**

## When

- When you are even **thinking** about starting, stopping or changing a project, program, plan or policy!



## Step 1: What is your purpose?

- What do you need to know?
- What is your consultation question?
- What is open and what is fixed?

## Step 2: Who is your audience?

- Who should be consulted and why
- Both internal and external
- What do you know about them?
- Reduce barriers
- Focus on benefits

## Planning for Successful Citizen Engagement in 10 'Easy' Steps



### Know your audience

Knowing who you are trying to reach is key to developing an effective consultation strategy. Who needs to know? And who needs to know first? Be sure to consider both internal audiences and external. Understanding who your audience is and how they might perceive your message will help you determine what tools and messages are required. It can also help you develop a better program as you identify – and address – road blocks before you even roll out the consultation campaign.

## Step 3: What level of consultation?

Responding to a Facebook post, developing an education campaign or implementing a full-scale consultation campaign are all examples of engagement. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) is a great resource for consultation planning. Their Spectrum of Public Engagement offers an easy tool for identifying the level of consultation you are seeking. These range from informing to consulting to empowering. Being really clear on what you want to achieve is a critical step in the planning process.



Check out their website for great resources such as their Toolkit with examples of different tools to use with different objectives in mind: [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)



## Step 4: What are your key messages?

- What's your consultation question: What do you need to know?
- Be clear on how info will be considered and/or used:
  - "used to help guide decisions"
  - "considered in making our decisions"

### Create your key messages

- Who do you want to reach, who will be impacted?
- What do you want your audience to do?
- What are the supporting facts, what are you doing to help?
- What are the benefits?

### The bottom line

- What are you doing?
- Why?
- Why better?
- What's the "call to action?"



## Step 5: How will you consult?

- Open Houses
- Town Hall Meetings
- Public Info Meetings
- Workshops or Webinars
- Tours, events, community fairs
- Online forums, polling
- Advisory Committees
- Stakeholder-specific meetings groups or individuals
- Neighbourhood "kitchen table" meetings
- Special types of meetings such as World Café or Design Charettes

**Can you go to where they are? Take your show in the road!**

### Support with materials

- Displays and panels
- Easy-to-read background info
- Presentations
- Discussion guides
- Meet and greet
- Treats!



## Step 6: Collect Feedback

- Surveys and feedback
- Print
- Online
- Phone
- Face-to-face
- Focus groups, etc.

## Step 7: How will you promote?

While we do a great job at developing programs, services and even planning our consultation, we can't forget to send the invites! People are busy. You need to invest time and resources to increase awareness and promote your consultation opportunities. There are five key areas to consider:

- Paid advertising
- Publicity (free or "earned" media coverage)
- Personal contact
- Promotional materials
- Online and electronic (websites, social media and digital engagement platforms)

### Paid advertising

- Radio
- TV
- Newspaper
- Online (Facebook)
- Billboards
- Bus boards

### "Free" or earned media publicity

- News releases & PSAs
- Coming event listings
- Media interviews
- Leverage your media coverage!

### Personal contact

- Presentations to community groups, Rotary Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- School programs
- Neighbourhood associations
- Block parties
- Trade shows and displays
- Go to where they are!



## Promotional materials

- Brochures, flyers
- Posters
- Fact sheets, FAQs
- Buttons, stickers,
- Bookmarks, fridge
- Magnets, stuffers, door hangers, post cards, mascots!

## Online and electronic avenues

- External and internal websites
- Email distribution lists
- In-house channels
- E-newsletters
- Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- Video

### Calling Customer Service!

Starting a new social media page or profile is like opening a new customer window. You need to allocate the resources to answer the 'calls.' The benefit is that instead of answering one 'call' at a time you can answer many!

## Let's Talk Digital!

Local governments are increasing their use of online engagement. Many are using their existing social media platforms to promote the process and opportunities to participate, providing information about what they are doing, why and the call-to-action. There are also a number of purpose-built consultation software platforms being used. These are evolving over time providing more options that can help meet both residents and government desire for information and engagement.

Some of the benefits include:

- Create a two-way conversation
- Reach new audiences
- Show you are open, transparent and responsive
- Provide a call to action
- Correct the incorrect and nip things in the bud
- Build your online community
- Look good!

## Communication channels



## Special online platforms



## Digital basics

- Have a plan to integrate with other communications – the magic is in the mix!
- Engage in person and continue online
- Create opportunities for people engage online
- Start conversations; post info of value on a regular basis
- Have policies for both internal and external users
- Use dashboards like HootSuite to make it easier to post to all your sites at once
- Monitor and respond to build engagement
- Be sure to promote your sites to increase awareness and engagement
- Experiment and adapt
- Continue to build relationships in the community – Face-to-face still rules (:)

### About those 'nasty' posts

- Breathe before you act
- Respond (everyone is watching to see how you handle this)
- Take the conversation off-line
- Offer to have them contact you
- Contact them privately
- Be careful about engaging ranting posters online!
- Get help from other colleagues as needed – we are all in the same virtual boat!

## Step 8. What's your timeframe

- Ensure a start and finish date
- Indicate where, how and when to return feedback forms
- Allow for late forms
- Describe next steps, when people can expect to hear back from you

## Step 9. Create an action plan

- Who does what by when and with what
- What resources, budget are required
- Book venues, equipment, advertising, promotional material production

### Who does what by when and with what?

- Like small commitments, plans work best when times and tasks identified
- It can be as simple as a form to record who will do what, by when (see example below)
- Or more details project management tools, such as GANT charts, excel spreadsheets, etc.

The action plan will also help you identify what resources are needed to support communications:

- Can it be done in-house or do you need to hire outside help, like a communication



consultant? (Note: any large capital projects, like water mains, roads, infrastructure, etc should have a percentage of their budget assigned to communications upfront – in order to save time and money down the road!)

- Or are there other organizations you can partner with to deliver the message?

## Step 10. How did it go?

- Planning: Monitor during and after
- Process: What worked and what didn't
- Outcome: Did you achieve your objectives?
- Report out

## Remember: The magic is in the mix!

- One size does not fit all
- For best results, do your planning and work out the details before you launch
- Match your tool to your audience and objective
- Start small and do it right
- Monitor, adjust and move on
- Celebrate your success!



**You can have brilliant ideas but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere.**  
- Lee Iacocca



What headline do you want to see on the front page of your local paper? What do you want people to say about what your local government is doing? What issues are keeping you up at night? With a passion for interactive training, Jan brings her 25 years of experience, insights and examples of why and how communications, public consultation and excellent media relations will lead to better outcomes and headlines – and improve your reputation along the way. Jan specializes in providing communications and media training to help local governments achieve their corporate goals and objectives, avoid or minimize issues and reduce the need for damage control around project roll-out. Jan offers customized training for your local government, from half-day to one-day sessions, in person and via webinar, tailored to address your needs.

### Tailor-made training to meet your needs: Popular topics

- **New! You are also the message:** Personal presentation skills training. Also includes filming and facilitated group feedback. Includes training to help you define your message and how to deliver it effectively.
- **Media relations: Tips, tools & techniques to improve your media coverage:** Media relations and media spokesperson training to improve your media coverage and reduce the need for damage control. Includes mock interview practice, and filming if desired. Personalized media and messaging development coaching, including video feedback.
- **Communication planning for successful projects in six simple steps:** Reduce the challenges associated with project delays such as public opposition, bad press and questions your Council. Learn how to plan your communications from the start. Can also include the development of a communication plan or policy to fit your strategic plans for new projects or services.
- **Successful citizen engagement in 10 easy steps:** This fast-paced and engaging session will help ensure you cover all your bases when looking for public input or feedback. Learn how to plan yours by using a tried, tested and true step-by-step guide to apply effective consultation planning in your organization, including pitfalls to avoid.

### About Jan

Known for her practical tips and humourous delivery, Jan shares her 25 years experience, energy and enthusiasm in helping the public sector implement new programs that not everyone wants - or wants to pay for. She has held key positions in program development and strategic communications with the Regional District of Central Okanagan, Interior Health, ICBC and others. She has introduced mandatory garbage and recycling programs that have netted some of the best results in Canada, developed province-wide recycling and traffic safety campaigns and helped local governments engage their communities on a variety of projects from landfill closures to referendums.



Jan has a Masters in Communications, certificate in Local Government Administration and Public Participation. She has taught citizen engagement for the University of Alberta and is a co-founder and instructor for BC's Local Government Management Association's e-learning webinars. She is a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and facilitator for the Okanagan Communicators Network. And you can contact her today! [jan@janenns.com](mailto:jan@janenns.com)

***“Council and staff loved Jan’s workshop...felt more like a day off than a day of learning and all took away new tools and skills they are already using.”***

Jim Chute  
CAO

City of Dawson Creek

***“Engaging, humourous and genuine. Facilitated great conversations!”***

Mayor Sharon Gaetz, City of Chilliwack

***“A seasoned media professional. She knows what we need to tell the story in a way that is meaningful, relevant and timely. I highly recommend her.”***

Derek Hinchliffe, Station Manager/News  
Director

Global Okanagan TV