

civic engage

## Four Things Your CAO Needs to Know from You Before Engaging the Public

February 3, 3:30 – 5:00  
2015 Union of BC Municipalities Convention

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## Centre for Dialogue / Civic Engage

*Mission:*  
To strengthen democracy through effective public engagement

*Programs and Services:*

- Public engagement services
- Capacity building and professional development

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## About us

- **Shauna Sylvester**, Director, SFU Center for Dialogue
- **Robin Prest**, Civic Engage Practice Lead, SFU Centre for Dialogue
- **Sebastian Merz**, Dialogue and Engagement Analyst, SFU Centre for Dialogue
- **Jenna Dunsby**, Dialogue and Engagement Convenor, SFU Centre for Dialogue

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## Session Goals

- Identify strategic considerations that help set public engagement up for success
- Explore different perspectives on planning public engagement processes
- Engage in interactive dialogue
- Distil learnings that are applicable to your reality

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## Agenda

1. Overview and Introductions
2. Four things your CAO needs to know
3. Simulation
4. Applying learnings at home
5. Closing

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## Presentation

Four things your CAO needs to know from you  
 before engaging the public

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### At a Glance

1. What is the ***purpose*** of public engagement and how does this add value to the decision-making process?
2. What ***constraints*** will limit the scope of public input?
3. How will the ***role*** of the public relate to the roles of elected officials, staff, and experts?
4. What is your ***commitment*** to the public?

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### Purposes of Engaging the Public

- Deliberate between options
- Conflict resolution
- Redistribute power
- Mobilize action
- Exchange knowledge and learning
- Fulfill legal requirements




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### Constraints: What is off the table?

- Existing policy
- Electoral mandates and promises
- Political imperatives: funding cycles, etc.
- Available resources
- Technical constraints
- Comfort with ambiguity

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Roles in Public Engagement

- Elected officials
- Staff
- Experts
- Stakeholders
- Public

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Roles in Public Engagement

Elected officials:

- Electoral mandate
- Deepen democratic process
- Fiduciary duty
- Accountable for decisions

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Roles in Public Engagement

Staff:

- Institutional memory
- Understand legislative context/process
- Provide expert research & analysis
- Frame options and trade-offs

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## Roles in Public Engagement

Experts:

- Evidence-based information
- Policy options
- Long-term thinking
- Cross-pollinate innovations and lessons learned
- 3rd party neutrality



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## Roles in Public Engagement

Stakeholder Groups:

- Reflect perspectives and (special) interests
- Topic expertise
- Network mobilization
- Proxy for others (sometimes)
- Anchored by member views



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## Roles in Public Engagement

Citizens:

- On-the-ground experience (feedback loop)
- Judge options relative to values (unique value add)
- Represent own interests (democratic process)
- Public license (come election time)



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## Commitment to the Public

- Why should they bother to invest their time?
- How do they know decision isn't already made?
- What question do you need the answer to?
- Everything you do or don't do sends a message.

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## Commitment to the Public: the IAP2 Spectrum

Level of the public's impact on decision-making

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Inform

Consult

Involve

Collaborate

Empower

Adapted from IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

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## Questions?

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Public Engagement Scenario

Middletown Dog Park  
(see scenario handout at your table)





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Public Engagement Scenario

- The person at your table with the birthday closest to today will play the role of the CAO.
- Everyone else will draw their role from the envelope at your table.
- Work together as a Council to answer your CAOs questions (see scenario).

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Questions

1. What is the *purpose* of public engagement on this issue and how does this add value to the decision-making process?
2. What *constraints* will limit the scope of public input?
3. How will the *role* of the public relate to the roles of elected officials, staff, and experts?
4. What is your *commitment* to the public?

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## Public Engagement Worksheet

Work in pairs to answer the four questions for a public engagement issue in your community (5 minutes each):

- *Purpose*
- *Roles*
- *Constraints*
- *Commitment*



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## Upcoming webinar

**Beyond the usual suspects: How to reach diverse audiences in public engagement**  
**Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016**

Please indicate preferred timing in your exit survey



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