Tools and Techniques for
Robust Community Involvement

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Presented by: Susan J. Harden
Why Involve the Community?

- Provides a means to incorporate the public’s values, interests, needs, and desires into decisions that affect their lives
- Improves the decision making process
- Encourages the public to provide meaningful input into the decision process
- Facilitates understanding
- IT’S FUN!

Source: International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
The Problem that has no name
- Number of people who volunteer increasing
- Civic engagement decreasing
- Social isolation & powerlessness increasing

Move more people from service to civics

Need to create opportunities for people to come together to define problems/issues and collectively develop solutions

Work with, not for communities
- Real, complex community issues are not being addressed
- Community divides are growing
- Engaging in “solution wars” without understanding the problem/issue

“Communities have been known to spend their energy debating which of a number of predetermined solutions is best, little aware that there is no agreement on the nature of the problem.” – For Communities to Work
Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation (1969)

1. Citizen Control
2. Delegated Power
3. Partnership
4. Placation
5. Consultation
6. Informing
7. Therapy
8. Manipulation

Degrees of Citizen Power

Degrees of Tokenism

Non participation
## IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

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Community Involvement Principles

- Meaningful
- Inclusive & Accessible
- Transparent
- Educational
- Diverse
- Active Listening
- Encourages Dialogue
- Fun

“People Will Support That Which They Help to Create.”
Meaningful Involvement

- Never just “hold a meeting”
- Reason for community to participate should be clear
- How the information to be used is known
- Next steps and follow-up are provided
- Provide involvement opportunities from beginning to end
- Evaluate efforts after complete
Inclusive & Accessible

- Everyone is a stakeholder – from residents to agencies to youth
- Promotion and outreach is widespread and appropriate for all stakeholders
- Multi-cultural aspects addressed (language, venues, etc.)
- Process is accessible to all
Transparent Process

- No hidden agendas or pre-determined outcomes
- Community members are involved in planning and decision-making
- No “sidebars” or closed door meetings
- Parameters and/or limitations are provided
Diverse Participatory Techniques

- Enlist a range of different participants
- Recognize that people participate best in different ways
- Employ a variety of techniques, tools, & formats to reach a variety of people
Educational

- Learning opportunities for the participants
- Learning opportunities for the facilitator/presenters/conveners
- Provide useful information and education
- Formal and informal
Active Listening

- Use active listening skills - people know when they are being listened to
- Do not plan a response while someone is speaking
- Accurately record comments
- Acknowledge all ideas & opinions
Encourages Dialogue

- “A conversation between two or more people”
- “To engage in an informal exchange of views”
- “Seeing the whole, rather than breaking it into parts . . . connections”
- “Sustained collective inquiry into everyday experience and what we take for granted”
- Not a debate or discussion
Community Involvement Techniques

Beyond the public hearing (and the “workshop”)!!!
Informational Techniques

- Handouts/Brochures
- Information Centers
- Comment Cards
- Websites
- Project Newsletters
- Hotlines
- Displays
- Kiosks
- CD-ROMS
- Self-running Presentations
Large Group Involvement Techniques

- Workshops
  - Post-it Note exercises
  - Sticky dots
  - Small group breakouts
- Open Houses
- Storytelling
- Block parties
- Festivals
- Conferences
- Forums
Santa Paula, CA

**BLOCK PARTY**

- Neighborhood Block Parties
  - Informal discussions in Spanish & English
  - Committee & staff recorded community comments
  - Family activities
  - Food & music
  - Interactive displays
Small Group Involvement Techniques

- Advisory Committees
- Blue Ribbon Panels
- Focus Groups
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Porch talks
- Coffee klatches
- “Expert” Panels
- Roadshows/Speakers Bureaus
- Meeting in a Box
Key Dialogic Approaches

- Study Circles
- Open Space Technology
- Bohmian Dialogue
- World Café
- Sustained Dialogue
- National Issues Forum (NIF)
- Citizen Juries
- Community Conversations
- Deliberative Poll
- Public Conversations Project
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Unconference
Southern Scottsdale, Arizona

World Café

Hosting Conversations That Matter
Southern Scottsdale, Arizona

World Café

- Groups of 4-5 seated at café-style tables
- “Menu” of pertinent topics and questions at each table
- Participants rotated tables for additional conversation – cross-pollination
- Placemats used to record ideas and displayed on wall
- Table host stayed at the table to help make connections and greet new guests
Experiential Involvement Techniques

- Walking audits
- Walking tours/block walks
- Bus tours
- Bike tours/rides
- Virtual tours
- Scavenger hunts
- Simulation games
Downtown Sierra Madre, Ca

Tour of Downtowns

- Open to entire community
- Precursor to Downtown Planning effort
- Guide prepared
  - Maps, information, photos
  - Space for notes
- Guest hosts at each site
“Hands-on” Involvement Techniques

- Design Charrettes
- Mapping
- Legos/blocks
- Logo contests
- Photovoice
- Collages
- Visual preference surveys
Downtown Imperial, California
Youth Logo Contest

- 75+ High School Students
- Graphic design & art classes
- Incorporated into curriculum
- Promote image for “downtown”
“Electronic” Involvement Techniques

- Real-time Scenario Modeling and Analysis
  - Community-Viz (land use scenario)
  - Quantm/VISSIM (transportation)
- TownScan Design Surveys
“Electronic” Involvement Techniques

- Websites
- Online Surveys
- Online Dialogue Circles
- Hand-held voting devices
- “21st Century Town Hall”
AmericaSpeaks

21st Century Town Hall
The Right Community Involvement Techniques Maximize Participation

- Workshops
- Youth Visioning
- Community Walks/Bike Rides
- Advisory Groups
- Websites
- Festivals & Fairs
- Porch Talks
- Logo Contests
- Information Centers
- Design Charrettes
- Storytelling
- One-on-One Interviews
- Panels
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Comment Cards
- Technology
- Simulation Games
- Radio & Television
Identifying Objectives

- **What are the objectives for the effort?**
  - What information do you need? Why?
  - What do you want to share? Why?
  - Why are you involving the community?
  - Why are you addressing this audience?
  - What is the anticipated level of decision power?

- **What limitations do you have?**
  - Time, budget, etc.
  - Politics
Selecting Involvement Techniques

- Match objectives & audiences with involvement techniques
  - What are the best techniques to meaningfully engage them?
  - What are the best techniques to meet your objectives?
  - How can you make it interesting and fun?
  - High-tech or low-tech?
  - Formal or informal or both?
# IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

## Increasing Influence of Public Impact

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| - Fact sheets  
- Web Sites  
- Open houses | - Public comment  
- Focus groups  
- Surveys  
- Public meetings | - Workshops  
- Deliberate polling | - Citizen Advisory Committees  
- Consensus-building  
- Participatory decision-making | - Citizen juries  
- Ballots  
- Delegated decisions |
Lincoln City, Oregon: “Community Immersion”
Lincoln City, OR

COMMUNITY IMMERSION

- Outreach, Info, & Promotion
  - Project Information Center
  - Project Website
  - Flyers
  - Newsletters
  - Comment Cards
Lincoln City, OR

Community Immersion

- Discussion Groups
- Interviews
- Community Walks
- Group Bike Rides
Lincoln City, OR

COMMUNITY IMMERSION

- Intergenerational Involvement
- Logo Development
Lincoln City, OR
COMMUNITY IMMERSION

- Design Charette & Workshop
  - “State of Community” Presentation
  - Priority Setting
  - Hands-On Design Teams
  - Presentation of Concepts
Lincoln City, OR
COMMUNITY IMMERSION

- Staff + Consultant + Community + Agency Collaboration
- Community Visions Articulated
Lincoln City, OR

COMMUNITY IMMERSION

- Community Ownership Expressed
Lincoln City, OR
COMMUNITY IMMERSION

- Community Visions to Reality
- Reinvestment and Job Creation
- Enhanced Sense of Community
"Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed citizens to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead
Getting Them There!
Know Your Audience

- Who are you trying to involve?
- Are there differences among stakeholders?
- Residents, business community, property owners
- Service providers, special interests, organizations
- Elected officials, boards, commissions, etc.
- Youth, seniors, families, singles, etc.
- Cultures, race, language, income, etc.
- Personalities/participation styles
- Availability
Getting Them There

- Match your audience with outreach tools/programs
  - How do you find them?
  - What are the best ways to reach them?
  - What are the best ways to motivate them to participate?
Getting Them There

- Flyers (or post cards, bookmarks, magnets, etc.)
- Posters
- Web site
- Cable channel ad
- Movie screens
- Advertisements (newspaper, radio)
- Mass mailings
- Press releases
Getting Them There

- Organization/club newsletters
- Bus/trolley seat drop
- Speakers bureau
- Door to door drops
- Schools
- Grocery store inserts
- Table displays at local events
- Churches
- Personal invitation/communication
Getting Them There

• Incentives:
  – Prizes & giveaways
  – Child care
  – Transportation vouchers
  – Entertainment (movie, music, games)
  – Special guests
  – Extra credit for students
  – FOOD!