

INFORMED PARTICIPATION

A Guide to Designing Public Deliberation Processes

The Open Government Partnership
Practice Group on Dialogue and Deliberation

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A NOTE FROM THE PRACTICE GROUP

This Guide helps practitioners design public deliberation processes that match the issue they want to solve. Processes and issues can fail to match for many reasons. For one thing, practitioners may favour a specific deliberative model and use it repeatedly, believing that it can be adapted to fit any new deliberative challenge.

In fact, no model is that flexible, whether it be citizens juries, scenario building, or something else. While these are excellent tools – and they have an important place in our deliberative toolkit – our Guide starts from the premise that different kinds of issues require different kinds of processes. Matching the right tool with the task is critical to success.

In addition, there are endless choices to be made about the particulars of a process: Who should be involved? How do we recruit participants? How do we set “clear” objectives? What kind of assurances and buy-in do we need from the sponsors? Should there be time-limits? This Guide helps practitioners think more systematically about questions like these.

Of course, no guide will answer every question. Our goal was to provide a roadmap that is comprehensive, principled, systematic, and accessible. We call our approach Informed Participation. It is designed to help practitioners understand the range of tools that are available, choose the right type for the task at hand, and then tailor the design to meet their needs. It is also designed from a public sector viewpoint, that is, we have taken account of the special concerns political or senior public service decision-makers will have about processes like these.

In the end, design raises deep and difficult issues. If the Guide walks the reader through the design process from beginning to end, much more needs to be said about some of the tasks along the way; but that must wait for another day. Our mission here was to define a general methodology for Informed Participation. We think that has been accomplished.



THE DELIBERATION PAPERS – VOLUMES I, II, AND III

This Guide is Volume II in a new series of publications, The Deliberation Papers. Volumes I and II are the work of the OGP Practice Group on Open Dialogue and Deliberation, a group of eight experts from five countries. The project was launched to help OGP member countries find a shared understanding of how deliberative processes work; and to provide them with the tools they need to begin using deliberative processes in their Action Plans. We hope they will take up the challenge.

Volume I in the series, *Deliberation: Getting Policy-Making Out from Behind Closed Doors*, provides accessible, concise, and cogent answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about public deliberation. It can be downloaded from the OGP website [here](#).

Volume III is currently in production and will provide a toolkit to train practitioners in Informed Participation. It will be released in August of 2019. Other papers are being planned.



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WHAT IS INFORMED PARTICIPATION?



Informed Participation:

A Guide to Designing Public Deliberation Processes is the second of the two volumes in this series on public deliberation.

Volume I, Public Deliberation: Getting Policy-Making Out from Behind Closed Doors, discusses some key challenges facing governments in today's policy-making environment and shows how public deliberation can solve them.

Volume II (this paper) lays out a step-by-step guide for designing public deliberation processes. Together, these two papers provide a comprehensive account of public deliberation, from its conceptual underpinnings to practical considerations around designing and delivering a process.

Both papers come at the issues from a government perspective. This is a key feature of Informed Participation. While any organization (or person) can convene a deliberative process, we assume the convenor and sponsor is a public sector organization, such as a government department or agency – and that matters. Governments have responsibilities that private or civil society organizations do not, such as meeting a particularly high standard of transparency.

We must also take account of the pressures on political leaders who will approve these processes and, ideally, act on their recommendations. Conditions like these can make a big difference to how an engagement process is designed and implemented.



With these comments in mind, let's start with an overview of our approach to engagement, which we call **Informed Participation** (see Volume I), before turning to the task of designing processes based on it.



THE FOUNDATIONS OF INFORMED PARTICIPATION

Informed Participation rests on a distinction between two basic forms of public engagement: Consultation and Public Deliberation.

Governments often use **consultation** to inform decision-making. For example, if a department is designing a program to retrain unemployed workers, it may consult local businesses on their labor needs. Consultation is also important to citizens. Imagine a debate over whether to allow logging in an ecologically sensitive area. Consultation gives people a chance to present their views and arguments to government.

Once the consultation stage is done, officials retreat behind closed doors to deliberate over what they've heard and to arrive at a decision. This Deliberative Stage can be very controversial. Officials are often forced to grapple with very different viewpoints, weigh different kinds of arguments, and make trade-offs between competing values and interests. As a result, the decisions they make behind closed doors can and often are challenged by people on the outside. Too often they think the process has unfairly advantaged one set of interests over the others and that the conclusions are therefore illegitimate.

Public deliberation enhances the legitimacy and quality of these decisions by giving the participants a meaningful role in the Deliberative Stage. Basically, the participants work through the issues together. As they do, they learn from one another and gain a greater understanding of the issues. Rules play an essential role here, especially ones like the following:

- Participants must engage in a spirit of openness and learning.
- They must be willing to inform themselves about relevant facts, as well as the values and the priorities of all those involved.
- They must be guided by the evidence and be willing to make reasonable accommodations.

Ideally, the participants (citizens, stakeholders, and possibly government officials) arrive at a shared solution that everyone recognises as being fair.

Public deliberation forms the basis of Informed Participation. Informed Participation is a specific approach or methodology that is explained and proposed over the course of these two papers. It has been designed to apply public deliberation in public sector contexts in ways that we think democratic governments across the political spectrum should find acceptable.



HOW INFORMED PARTICIPATION LEGITIMIZES DIFFICULT DECISIONS

In Informed Participation, participants become informed through a specific kind of learning process: they listen to one another, provide and assess evidence, consider other viewpoints, hear from experts, and discuss the merits of the issues raised and the solutions proposed.

Informed participation thus is NOT about getting the participants to understand and accept government's viewpoint. It is not a communications exercise. It is about encouraging them to draw on their experience and use their voices in ways that allow them to learn together.

This new, more meaningful role for participants comes with a price: each participant must commit to doing their part to make the process work. Basically, they must agree to respect the rules. Doing so creates a sense of personal responsibility for the success of the process and of ownership of the decisions that result from it.

Ownership is very different from the kind of buy-in associated with consultation. When decision-makers talk about getting public buy-in, typically they mean using consultation to get the public to agree to their plan. Ownership is about making participants feel they have a personal stake in a project. This gives the project the kind of deep public support it needs to arrive at and legitimize difficult trade-offs.

It also creates the commitment and resilience needed to sustain a project with long-term objectives, such as poverty reduction, climate change management, or strategic innovation. Initiatives like these can take many years to complete and will require numerous rounds of deliberation and action. (The cyclical use of deliberation is discussed in Section 2.6.)

Building a strong sense of ownership of the process and the objectives in the citizens, stakeholders and/or communities involved helps ensure that the project's sustainability is not dependent on a highly engaged minister or senior public servant who may move on before the project is completed.



DESIGNING THE ENGAGEMENT TO MATCH THE TASK

Informed Participation distinguishes between three different styles of public deliberation, each of which engages the participants in a different way:



Open Dialogue asks people to draw on relevant experience of an issue and to use their natural conversational skills to exchange views and propose options to solve it.



Deliberative Analysis has more formal rules of engagement and focuses participants' attention on facts and arguments, and the evidence that support them.



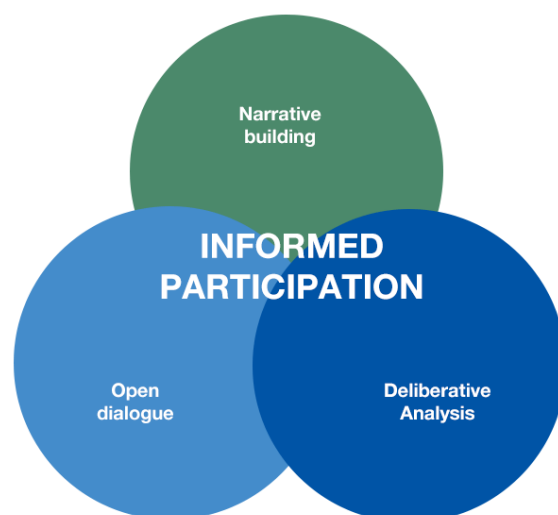
Narrative-Building draws on the participants' lived-experience to develop a series of alternative stories about an important change or challenge. Stories are useful because they speak to people in ways they understand and identify with.

These three styles of deliberation all contribute to informed participation, but each one does so in a different way. For example, narrative building can reach large numbers of people – easy to scale - but can be weak on generating evidence-based findings. On the other hand, deliberative analysis is good for arriving at conclusions based on facts and data but is difficult to take to scale.

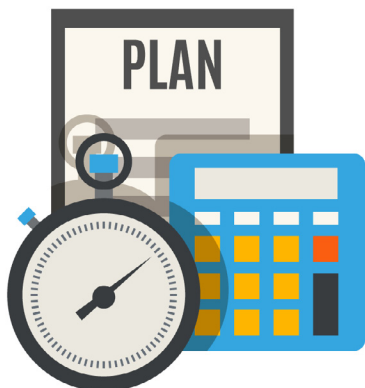
None of these practices should be considered better than the others. Rather, they are suited to different tasks. If the process is well-designed and the dialogue style matches the task, all three approaches can give the public an **informed** and **meaningful** say on an issue and can build **ownership**. The right choice will depend, for instance, on how many people need to be involved in the process and the kinds of analysis and evidence required.

BLENDING DIFFERENT STYLES OF DELIBERATION

While distinguishing these three styles of deliberation helps us see when and how each one is useful, in practice, they are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to take a blended approach that uses aspects of each. For example, by creating separate spaces for open dialogue and deliberative analysis, then aligning the two processes through development of a shared narrative, all three styles are put to work. The goal of a blended approach is to maximize the strengths of the different styles by getting all three of them working together.



A blended process has important benefits: it can engage many people, give them a sense of shared ownership of the project, and ensure that decision-making is rigorous and fair. But blended processes are often quite complex, requiring more time, resources, and effort to complete successfully. As with any engagement process, it is crucial to design a process that is fit for purpose.



A SUMMARY OF THE APPROACH

So, to summarize our approach:

- Public Engagement has two basic forms: Consultation, and Public Deliberation
- Informed Participation is a specific methodology – a way of doing public deliberation that has been designed for use in practical, public-sector contexts, such as government departments or agencies
- Informed Participation creates a sense of ownership of the decisions among participants
- Informed Participation recognizes three different styles of deliberation: Open Dialogue, Deliberative Analysis, and Narrative Building
- An informed participation engagement can include one or all three of these styles; and these can be adapted to the circumstances to get the best outcome



This Guide helps the reader choose between these three engagement styles to explore and solve an issue, then design and implement a process that matches the issue. The next section introduces three fundamental principles that guide the design and execution of deliberative processes; then we turn to the actual task of designing a public deliberation process based on Informed Participation.



THREE PRINCIPLES OF INFORMED PARTICIPATION

A principle is a general rule that guides planning and decision-making, and thereby helps to make it more systematic. This Guide includes three basic principles:

Flexibility, Transparency, and Trust – which guide the development and implementation of deliberative processes. Each of the Tables below includes a list of secondary principles or “protocols” to help practitioners understand better how the principle might apply in different circumstances.





TRANSPARENCY

Transparency ensures that data and information relevant to the success of an engagement are made available to all the participants. Important information should not be hidden or withheld without strong reasons, such as concerns over privacy or security. Where reasons exist, they should be explained to the participants. Additional rules for information-sharing and feedback may be proposed as needed. All rules should be vetted by the participants, modifications or alternatives may be proposed, and they should be approved by a vote. Voting itself may be a subject of discussion regarding a voting rule: should decision require a simple majority, a super majority (66%), consensus, or some other arrangement?

FLEXIBILITY

Engagement processes can create their own dynamic and often require adjustment and change along the way. Flexibility gives managers and participants the space they need to respond to changing circumstances or special needs. If changes are made to a process, this should be done in a transparent way. Transparency thus supports flexibility.



Transparency Protocols

Set clear goals: Are the goals of the process clear, relevant, and achievable? Are the timelines realistic? Are the resources adequate?

Set clear boundaries on decision-making: Are the scope and boundaries of the decisions that participants are invited to consider clearly defined so participants know what is on the table and what is not?

Make information available: Have relevant documents and information been made available to participants in a timely and accessible way? Is adequate information being made available to the public?

Provide feedback to participants: Once the process is done and government has reviewed the findings and made its decisions, how will it report back to the participants and the public on how the findings from the process were considered and used?

Validate the process: Has the integrity of the process been discussed with participants before the dialogue begins? Has it been revisited during the process as required?

Flexibility Protocols

Design the process to fit the context: Engagement processes are not one-size-fits-all. A single process may include several stages, multiple dialogue streams, and/or different ways of engaging at different stages. The needs of the process change along with the context. Has every process and each stage been designed with careful attention to the surrounding circumstances? Are managers ready, willing, and able to adjust and change the process as circumstances demand?

Evaluate at each stage: Are appropriate measures and indicators in place to assess the progress and results of a process? Is information being collected on process performance? Is the steering committee carefully monitoring each stage of the process and open to adjustment to ensure objectives are met? Are they checking in regularly with the participants and with decision-makers?



TRUST

Public deliberation is a rules-based approach to finding solutions. In Volume I, we said that the participants must listen to one another, reflect on different views, consider options, and be willing to accept change. On government's side, the relationship must be more than a display of power or authority. Government must be responsive to citizens and stakeholders, respectful of their views, and flexible in its approaches.

Making this work requires lots of trust – on both sides. If the parties don't trust one another, the process will quickly stall. Informed Participation recognizes five fundamental conditions that support and build trust. These five conditions are the basic rules on which our approach rests:



Trust Protocols

Evidence: Participants must be willing to recognise, assess, and respond fairly to evidence when it is presented; and to provide evidence to support their own factual claims. This may include lived experience, research studies, examples of best practices, experiences of groups, and so on. Evidence helps to ensure that the dialogue is grounded in facts and truth.

Mutual respect requires that the partners listen to one another and that there is give and take in their exchanges.

Openness requires that participants engage in self-examination and the weighing of evidence; that they are willing to share information and ideas, and to search for new opportunities and solutions.

Inclusiveness ensures that all those with a real stake in the issue are represented in the dialogue.

Personal responsibility is necessary to ensure that the dialogue is not just about talk, but that the parties will seek to understand and play their roles fairly and respect any commitments they make.

These five conditions (or basic rules) are mutually reinforcing and work together in ways that are mutually supportive. By the same token, undermining any one of them risks undermining the overall trust needed to make the process succeed. Informed Participation includes an **evaluation framework** to identify and employ practices that will build trust and strengthen the process by strengthening these five conditions. We will return to this in Section 2.7 on process evaluation.



DESIGNING AN INFORMED PARTICIPATION ENGAGEMENT

This part of the Guide sets out the steps for constructing a reliable engagement plan for Informed Participation. A full engagement process includes four basic stages, each of which includes a checklist of steps. (The process can be repeated as a series of cycles in order to achieve larger or longer-term objectives. See Section 2.6 on the cyclical approach.)



The four stages are as follows:

- 1. Stage One** focuses on **setting the parameters** of the process. The results from this will be incorporated into a Terms of Reference document, which will serve as the authoritative statement of the process's scope and objectives.
- 2. Stage Two** uses the Terms of Reference to **develop an engagement plan** that will achieve the project objectives. This plan provides a guide for the next two stages in the cycle: implementing it and evaluating the results. Developing the plan occupies most of the remainder of this Guide.
- 3. Stage Three** involves **executing the engagement plan**. While the main steps for implementation will be set out in the plan, keeping the process on course requires knowledge, skill, and good judgement, as well as a capacity to react quickly and effectively to unforeseen circumstances.
- 4. Stage Four** assesses **how effectively the engagement effort has achieved its objectives and how to improve the process, if a second cycle is planned**. In such a case, building the longer-term relationships to support further cycles is a key goal of the overall process. This ensures that the learning from the process has been fully harvested, distilled, and carried over into the next round of engagement, which, in turn, contributes to the goal of continuous improvement.



THE DELIBERATION CYCLE

1. Create the Pre-Planning Team
2. Engage Decision-Makers
3. Define the Objectives
4. Define the Issue
5. Define the Scope
6. Define the Process
7. Define Process Governance



1. Establish the Steering Committee
2. Develop Participant Profiles
3. Select the Process-Type
4. Recruit the Facilitator
5. Design the Process
6. Develop the Recruitment Strategy
7. Adopt Success Measures
8. Draft the Engagement Plan

Implement the Engagement Plan

1. Assess Progress on the Objectives
2. Build the Relationship

1. SET THE PARAMETERS

In Stage One of the engagement process, the main task is to draft the **Terms of Reference** for the process, which is the master planning tool that will guide development of the engagement plan.

What is in the Terms of Reference?

The Terms of Reference includes a clear statement of:

- The Project Objectives
- The Issue and Scope of the Discussion
- A Process Outline (including Timelines, Major Milestones, Key Project Stakeholders, and Required Resources)
- Process Governance

Additional information may be included in the Terms of Reference, such as special principles or conditions affecting the process. Drafting this document involves six basic steps:

Seven Steps to Produce the Terms of Reference

1. Create the Pre-Planning Team
2. Engage Key Decision-Makers
3. Define the Objectives
4. Define the Issue
5. Define the Scope
6. Define the Process
7. Define Process Governance



1.1 CREATE THE PRE-PLANNING TEAM

Planning starts with the creation of a pre-planning team to draft the Terms of Reference for the process. Once that document has been finalized, the team will be reconstituted as the process steering committee, possibly with changes to its membership. The planning team is thus a temporary structure whose optimal size is about five or six people. Typically, a few members will come from the convening government, but the team should also include representatives from key stakeholder groups and/or some citizens to ensure a diversity of perspectives. The team should be led by a chair, who normally comes from the government side and, typically, from the sponsoring organization.

1.2 ENGAGE KEY DECISION-MAKERS

When the convenor of a process is a government department or agency, the key decision-makers who will adopt, approve, or reject the findings from the process will usually come from the sponsoring government or department. At the highest level, this would be the minister or, possibly, the cabinet. Alternatively, the minister may be represented by departmental officials.



To succeed, the project will need the full support of the decision-makers. To secure this, the process must be closely aligned with their needs and expectations. As a first step, the chair of the pre-planning committee should meet with the decision-makers to ensure the pre-planning committee fully understands their views on the process AND that the decision-makers fully understand how public deliberation works.

Likely questions to be raised include the following:

- **Why are they launching the process?** The pre-planning committee must understand the decision-makers' view on the issues. Supposed, for example, there are stakeholder tensions that are preventing the government from moving ahead with a project. What do the decision-makers think is the real issue? How bad are the tensions? Do they have a view on how the tensions should be resolved? How firm are their views?
- **Are they clear on their objectives?** Are the decision-makers clear on what they want the process to achieve. Can they state clearly what they think are its objectives?
- **Can they define success?** It may be helpful to ask the decision-makers to articulate what they think would count as success for the process. If they are unable to answer clearly, further questions should be posed to prod and test them on this. This can shed much light on their proposed objectives and may help focus their views.
- **Are the expectations reasonable?** Sometimes the decision-makers' view of a successful conclusion is unrealistic or doesn't fit with their objectives. If so, this needs to be exposed. The goals of the process and the vision of success must align and be achievable. This may require some hard thinking about the timelines, available resources, goodwill of the participants, as well as the complexity of the issues. Do the decision-makers' expectations look achievable? If not, why not? Are they willing to adjust their expectations?

- **Do they know how public deliberation works?** Decision-makers must be clear on the rules of engagement (see The Seven Questions, Question 7). Don't assume they understand the process or their role in it. Often, they do not. This should always be explained. For example, a minister must clearly understand that he/she cannot interfere in the process, change the Terms of Reference once the process is underway, or choose to ignore the results just because he/she wanted a different outcome. (These points are also discussed at length in Volume 1, *Public Deliberation: Getting Policy-Making Out from behind Closed Doors*.)
- **What are they willing to put on the table?** Rarely must the decision-makers put "everything" on the table to encourage serious participation, but they must be willing to give participants enough space to make decisions that they feel are meaningful. (See Section 1.4 below.) Without this kind of space, there is no incentive for them to participate or to make trade-offs with one another. What options are the decision-makers willing to put on the table?
- **What commitments will they make about implementing recommendations?** Participants need some assurance that their work will be taken seriously by decision-makers. Rarely will this mean they simply commit to enacting recommendations from the process. Nor do participants usually expect this. They do want to know, however, that decision-makers are genuinely committed to the process and will take the results very seriously. Decision-makers should also commit to some process for reporting back to participants on the recommendation. This should include a commitment to explain their reasons if the recommendations are not acted on.

Following this initial exchange with the decision-makers, the committee is ready to start drafting the Terms of Reference. Throughout the exercise, it should continue to seek feedback from the decision-makers, as well as from relevant stakeholders or citizen groups. As we'll see, some of the questions already raised will be revisited, perhaps several times, as the discussion around the Terms of Reference evolves.



1.3 DEFINE THE OBJECTIVES

The Terms of Reference starts with a clear statement of the project objectives. For example, a project may aim to develop a new training program for the unemployed, bring a long-standing labour dispute to an acceptable conclusion, or ensure that a new hospital is designed to fit in with the community around it. The objectives provide an authoritative reference point for what the process is supposed to achieve. They are a beacon for the Steering Committee as it designs and implements the process. Several considerations should be weighed in drafting this statement:

- **Are the objectives clear and easy to understand?** The objectives are the project's North Star. They must be clear and understandable to avoid disagreement or uncertainty over what they imply and what the process must do to achieve them.
- **Are the objectives achievable?** As noted above, not only must the objectives be clear, they must be achievable. The pre-planning group should survey the policy environment to see how key circumstances may impact on the goals: Are the parties to the issue too divided to reach a compromise on the issue? Is there enough time to work through the issues? Are there other circumstances that might hinder or prevent real progress? Does the sponsor have the resources to adequately support the project?
- **Are the objectives sound?** The objectives must also be sound, that is, achieving them should make a significant contribution to resolving whatever issues occasioned the process in the first place.
- **Does everyone agree on the objectives?** Participants won't dedicate themselves to making the process work unless they support the objectives. Getting agreement on them may require dialogue and discussion. For example, if the project aims at defining a new training program for unemployed workers, the government's objective might be to lower unemployment rates, while the goal of a key stakeholder, such as unions, may be to ensure high-paying, sustainable jobs. These goals are not incompatible, but they are different. The pre-planning team may need to find a way to define the project objectives that includes both.
- **Are there any special process objectives?** Process objectives aim to change some important aspect of the relationship between the parties in the process. Examples include inclusiveness, learning, or trust. For example, a poverty reduction process might take special steps to engage marginalized communities like the homeless. The process objective here – inclusion – aims at strengthening the relationship between the homeless and other stakeholders and/or governments in the process. Participation in deliberative process can result in important benefits like this, especially if the process is expected to last through several cycles (see Section 2.6, The Cyclical Approach).

Getting the right statement of objectives is a critical first step in the process, but it is only a first step. To succeed, the deliberation process must also be perceived as fair; and this raises difficult questions about the process, such as who should have a seat at the table or what voting rules will apply. These questions are dealt with at length in Stage 2, but the Terms of Reference sets the parameters for this discussion by answering a few basic questions about the issue and the process.



1.4 DEFINE THE ISSUE

What kind of deliberative challenge is this?

Suppose Country X wants a test to assess whether a medical degree from a foreign country should be recognized in X or whether some upgrading is required first. Developing such a test is a complex task and public deliberation can be very helpful. For example, the government might assemble a group of experts and ask them to devise a list of criteria. This may take some time, but it can usually be done. Importantly, discussions like this usually don't involve deep disagreements over values. The issues here tend to be more technical and a group of fair-minded experts will normally reach agreement on a list of criteria.

Contrast this with developing a list of candidates from which to select a "woman of national distinction" who will be featured on a country's banknote. Again, a group of people might be assembled to deliberate over who should be on the list, but the discussion would be different from that over certification criteria. It will focus on which of the country's values, goals, and priorities the group feels should be highlighted and which women best exemplify these traits. People will disagree and they will have to make compromises to complete the list.

Finally, imagine a process to define principles that will guide doctors in deciding when medically assisted dying is acceptable. This is about fundamental values. Some people will insist that the practice is never acceptable, some will say it should only be allowed when someone is terminally ill and in great pain, others will say it should be up to the patient to decide. The discussion here will be focused on ways to find a "balance" between highly important and deeply held values and beliefs.



Public deliberation can be very useful in all three cases, but the discussions will be very different. To get the best result, the process must be designed to match the task. In Informed Participation, the Terms of Reference will provide direction on this, starting with a clear statement of the task to be completed.



What task is the process supposed to accomplish?

A statement of the task for each of the three cases above might go as follows:

- **Certification:** *The deliberative task in the Certification example is to develop a list of expert criteria for certification in the field. This discussion will focus on expert knowledge and evidence and will be mainly about the technical requirements of the skill. We should expect considerable agreement on these criteria among the experts. We can call this the **Expertise Challenge**.*
- **Candidates for the Banknote:** *The task is to arrive at a list of candidates that exemplify community values, goals, and priorities. Although people will have important differences about which values are most important or deserving of recognition, there are sources of evidence to support different claims. For example, the community's institutions and practices might be cited as a guide to community values. Or, tools such as surveys or polling could be used to gather evidence to support a view. In sum, there will likely be serious disagreements on the values and the candidates, but evidence-informed discussion is possible. We can call this the **Mixed Challenge**, because it involves a complex mix of values and expertise.*
- **Assisted Dying:** *The task here is to strike a balance between deeply conflicting values of community members. The subject is highly subjective in the sense that people's values will differ greatly and there is little or no evidence to support one view over another. This discussion is likely to be very difficult and perhaps some members of the team will remain firmly opposed to key decisions. Voting rules may play a key role in arriving at conclusions. We can call this the **Values Challenge** because it focuses mainly on conflicts over values.*



Once the task for public deliberation has been defined, the next step in Informed Participation is to define the scope of the response.



1.5 DEFINE THE SCOPE

What is “meaningful” participation?

Informed Participation is about making decisions together, sometimes very difficult ones. Before the participants commit to a process, they will want to know that if they succeed in finding a solution, the government will give it serious consideration. Without such a commitment, they will have little incentive to work hard or make difficult compromises.

At the same time, governments are unlikely to expose themselves to big risks. Rarely will they hand a complex decision to a group of stakeholders and/or citizens and simply promise to act on their recommendations. Governments need some assurance that any solutions the group might propose will be ones it can work with.

Defining **the scope of an Informed Participation engagement** is about balancing this tension. On one hand, governments must be willing to create enough space for public deliberation that the participants feel the effort is worthwhile. On the other hand, this space must be confined enough to give the government confidence it can work with whatever decisions the group is likely to make.

The scope for public deliberation can vary greatly, depending on the issue, the process, and the decision-makers. The scope may be quite limited, such as asking participants to provide a lengthy list of candidates for a banknote. In this case, much deliberative work would still need to be done to prioritize these candidates and, finally, to choose the right one. This second phase of the discussion likely would be carried out by government officials with, perhaps, the final choice going to cabinet.

Alternatively, government could ask the participants to take their deliberations as far as they can, possibly even promising them that if they reach full agreement on a single candidate, it will act on this.



In sum, the challenge facing the pre-planning committee is to clearly define the scope of the recommendations it is asking for. The Terms of Reference must make clear what is inside the boundaries and what is outside. Whether these boundaries are broad or narrow, the critical question will be whether the participants feel the space is big enough to give them a meaningful say in the solutions AND the government feels the decision space is constrained enough that it is confident it can work with the group’s recommendations.

In Informed Participation, a government always retains the right to refuse to act on advice but, ideally, a well-crafted Terms of Reference will be a big step toward securing a sincere commitment to the process from both the government and the participants.



1.6 DEFINE THE PROCESS

The Terms of Reference will also set some parameters around the process. Principally, this focuses on who the key participants will be, how they will be engaged, and the resources and timelines for the process.

Who are the participants?

Informed Participation distinguishes between four main types of participants:

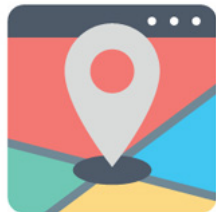
- **Professional Subject-Matter Experts:** These are individuals with a high level of expertise in a given area. To qualify as expertise, the knowledge and/or experience should be widely recognized and have some agreed upon standards. Experts are expected to bring facts, evidence, and informed views to the table, rather than opinions and interests. They may be invited to help inform a discussion; or, where the task is largely an expert one, such as the credential recognition case, they may be the principal participants in the process.
- **Stakeholders:** These individuals represent an organization, movement, or community of interest. Usually, they will be invited to participate because the decisions are expected to have a significant impact on their interests. Stakeholders may or may not be experts but, when they are, it should be recognized that their primary role is to speak for an interest, rather than to bring impartial perspectives to the discussion.
- **Citizens:** Citizens and stakeholders should be distinguished. Citizens have a unique relationship with government that gives them a special interest in all its activities and responsibilities. Citizens can speak authoritatively for their private interests (e.g. as members of a specific community) AND for the public interest at large. As we'll see below (Section 2.2), citizens are in effect the "experts" on questions of basic values and priorities, and on many questions related to "lived-experience."
- **Government(s):** Government officials often participate in deliberative processes. Suppose a process aims at regulating some aspect of the labour market. A government may have a variety of programs and services that could be impacted by this, such as immigration rules, training programs, and tax laws. These may need to be represented at the table by an official. However, if officials do participate, they must agree to play by the same rules as the others: they must be willing to listen to others, weigh the evidence, make reasonable compromises, and be forthright about the concerns and interests they represent.



The Terms of Reference should provide some guidance on who are the main participant groups in the process and why. The basis for these choices is discussed in Section 2.2 (Develop Participant Profiles), a few pages below.

What kind of logistical constraints are there on the process?

A final step in this part of the Terms of Reference involves setting some basic parameters on the design of the process from a logistical viewpoint:



Scale and location

Will it involve events in different locations, perhaps even across an entire country? Is it aimed at engaging small groups of people in lengthy, difficult discussions? Or is it meant more as a casual town-hall-type exchange of ideas and information? Will it target more citizens or stakeholders? Will there be a final report?



Timelines and Milestones

Public deliberation makes significant demands on people. They must think through the options and come to terms with the concessions they need to make to reach an agreement. This takes time. It also makes the process vulnerable to impacts from other processes or events. Suppose a minister unexpectedly declares that a process must be wrapped up in time to prepare for a coming election. The typical response is to ratchet back the process timelines, but this can be a serious mistake. Pushing people through the process too quickly or without the right supports can backfire. The Terms of Reference provides firm timelines and milestones and anticipates any outside processes or events that could affect the project or critical deadlines, such as an election.



Resources

The same goes for resources. While a detailed and reliable assessment must await the engagement plan, any clear ceilings or limitations should be stated from the start and other process that could impact on this – such as a departmental planning process – should be anticipated. The Terms of Reference should try to anticipate key resource decision that will affect the project or critical deadlines that it cannot pass, such as an election.



1.7 DEFINE PROCESS GOVERNANCE

The last step in developing the Terms of Reference is to define the process governance. In Informed Participation, such processes are usually led by a steering committee. This may function more as a board of directors, which provides strategic direction and oversight to a process manager(s). Alternatively, the process manager(s) may be on the steering committee, which then is a combination of a management body and a board of directors. The pre-planning committee is the natural candidate to become the steering committee, likely with some additions or other changes.

Establish process governance

- Will there be a steering committee or working group to oversee the process?
- How will its members be selected?
- Are its roles clearly defined?
- How will this group's activities remain transparent to the participants?
- Is there a clear and reliable link to the decision-makers?

Draft the Terms of Reference

Completing the steps in this section should provide the information needed to draft most Terms of Reference documents for an Informed Participation engagement. The document will then serve as the authoritative statement of the objectives and scope of the project. Typically, it will not be more than a few pages in length, and should be written in clear, accessible language.



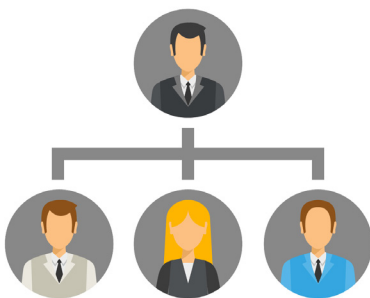
In sum, the Terms of Reference for an Informed Participation engagement should provide guidance on the scale and location of the process. It should also consider and note other cycles, such as planning cycles, elections, or leadership terms, that may impact on timelines, resources, or people's availability. As far as possible and appropriate, the process should be aligned with the outside process to ensure the two do not conflict. As with the last section on defining the participants, completing this section requires the analysis and consideration of factors that will be discussed at length in Stage Two.



2. CREATE AN ENGAGEMENT PLAN

If Stage One of the planning process (Set the Parameters) defines the objectives and scope of the process, Stage Two focuses on developing an engagement plan to guide the process. This includes the following subtasks:

1. Establish the Steering Committee
2. Develop Participant Profiles
3. Recruit the Facilitator
4. Design the Process
5. Develop the Recruitment Strategy
6. Adopt Success Measures/Indicators
7. Draft the Engagement Plan



2.1 ESTABLISH THE STEERING COMMITTEE

Stage Two begins by establishing a steering committee to oversee the three remaining stages of the process. This committee is the successor to the pre-planning group from Stage One and is usually formed from it, though the new committee will likely include some new members and/or lose some of the old ones, as appropriate.

The new committee's membership must be diverse enough to ensure that its discussions credibly represent key interests in the process and contain the expertise needed to complete its tasks. The Terms of Reference should provide guidance on both, as well as other important decisions, such as the committee's role in process governance.



2.2 DEVELOP PARTICIPANT PROFILES

In Stage One (Section 1.5) we identified four main participant groups:



1. Professional Subject-Matter Experts



2. Stakeholders



3. Citizens



4. Governments

We also promised further direction on how participants should be selected from these different groups. This requires the development of participant profiles. As a first step, two of these participant groups need further elaboration: stakeholder and citizens.

What/who is a stakeholder?

There is no single, satisfactory definition of a stakeholder. One widely-used definition views a stakeholder **as a person or organization with a “vested interest” in a set of decisions or actions by the Principal** (i.e. the organization in which the stake is held). While a useful start, the definition fails to convey the diversity of interests, roles, and statuses that stakeholders can have. Stakeholder relationships include many other features that can and often do play an important role in defining the relationship or shaping an engagement process, including:

1. **Professional Subject-Matter Experts:** As noted in Stage One, subject-matter experts are a special kind of stakeholder who are engaged because of their technical expertise in the area. Generally, they are expected to be relatively neutral in their views and not to have a vested interest (see below) in the issue under discussion in the same way as other stakeholder participants.

2. **Major vs. Minor Stakeholders:** The size of a stakeholder’s “stake” in an issue can range from minor to very significant. It is determined by the impact a government’s decisions or actions can have on the stakeholder’s ability to achieve its own objectives. Generally, the bigger the impact, the bigger the stake; and the more legitimacy and urgency to the stakeholder’s claim that it should be consulted on matters that affect its interests.

3. **Degree of Influence:** Influence refers to a stakeholder’s ability to influence others in the community or affect a decision or action by government through indirect means, such as friendly persuasion or bringing organizational pressures to bear on it, say, by rallying unwanted media attention or lobbying. Influence and power are not the same thing. Power is the authority to make a decision that will directly affect an outcome. Influence refers to the stakeholder’s ability to use tactics to affect a government’s outcomes.



4. **Advocates vs. Service Providers:** Advocacy organizations exist to advance a view or position and, in result, tend to focus more on ends than means. While their views may be well-reasoned, or supported by evidence, they are inclined to resist competing views and ignore appeals for compromise. By contrast, service provider organizations are very focused on the quality of the service they provide to their clients. Questions around means—how the service is provided—are therefore of high importance and tend to be resolved by analysis, evidence, and experience, rather than compromises over value judgements. Many organizations have both advocacy and service provider roles, so which arm of the organization participates in an engagement process can make a significant difference to the style and tone of their contribution.

5. **Persons as Stakeholders:** Individuals can also have a vested interest in an issue, much like organizations. Someone who lives next to a forest that has been zoned for logging has a stake in the issue. Logging could impact the value of their property or their enjoyment of the surroundings. Their stake in this issue is therefore greater than someone who lives far away from it. A consultation on the proposed logging might be held in the neighbourhood to give these individuals an opportunity to express their views. Individuals are therefore often involved in engagement processes because of their interest in the issue and, in this sense, are often stakeholders.

6. **Governments as Stakeholders:** We saw in Stage One that in Informed Participation government officials often participate in deliberative processes as stakeholders. Suppose a process aims at regulating some aspect of the labour market. A government may have a variety of programs and services that could be impacted by this, such as immigration rules, training programs, and tax laws. Interests like these may need to be represented at the table by an official. When considering who should participate, the steering committee should ask whether there are government programs or other interests that should be directly represented by an official, who would then participate as a government stakeholder.



Distinguishing citizens from stakeholders

Individuals, we said, can be engaged as stakeholders; but they can also be engaged as citizens, which is a different role. In a democracy, citizens have a relationship to their governments that is more fundamental than stakeholders. Sovereignty, after all, rests with the people, not stakeholders, which is why citizens have the right to vote and to choose their leaders. Elections allow citizens to make important choices about the values, goals, and priorities of their society that are not open to stakeholders.

Informed Participation recognizes the difference between citizens and stakeholders. Specifically, citizens are sometimes called on to participate in important decisions, while stakeholders are excluded. Citizen assemblies are one example. They can be used to let citizens decide important questions, such as a constitutional amendment, a new voting system, or whether assisted dying should be legalized.

Consultation generally blurs the difference between citizens and stakeholders. Imagine a series of town halls that asks participants whether they believe assisted dying should be legalized and, if so, under what conditions, and how the practice should be implemented.

First, let's note that questions about whether to allow assisted dying are of a different order from questions about where the service should be performed or by whom. Not only should public deliberation distinguish between them but, given that this involves a choice about the basic values that define their society – the “social contract” – the process designers should ask if citizens have a privileged role in answering the basic question: Should assisted dying be legalized?

Events like the town hall above normally allow citizens and stakeholders to participate on an equal footing. This not only blurs the difference between them, in fact, it can advantage stakeholders over citizens. Stakeholders are often policy experts with developed presentation skills. This can make a town hall meeting intimidating for citizens, many of whom will remain silent or, alternatively, will try to speak in a similar, technical style, even though they lack these skills. They are rarely as well prepared or trained as the stakeholders and therefore are unable to present and defend their views nearly as effectively. This can put them at a huge disadvantage.

When a question involves basic values, priorities, or fundamental changes to the institutions of government, the steering committee should carefully consider what roles should be played by citizens and stakeholders, respectively:

- Is this a decision for citizens alone?
- Do different aspects of the issue need to be separated, some of which may include stakeholders and some of which may not?
- Should citizens and stakeholders have separate discussions to ensure that stakeholders do not intimidate or bully citizens?
- Can discussions with citizens be cast in language and a style of public deliberation that is more accessible to them, such as a greater use of stories, examples, and values, rather than policy jargon, abstract principles, or statistics?

The Terms of Reference should have defined the issue and the process clearly enough to guide the steering committee's discussion of questions like these.



Creating participant profiles

Once agreement on the main participants has been reached, the next step in Informed Participation is to develop participant profiles, that is, a list of the basic qualifications that individuals must meet to participate as members of these groups. These profiles might include special skills sets, important demographic qualifications, membership in key organizations, and so on. The list will vary with the process. For example, while a discussion on foreign credential recognition will need subject-matter experts, one on assisted dying will likely need a good balance of citizens. In some processes, the door will be open to anyone who wishes to participate, in others, the profiles will make the selection process very rigorous.

These profiles usually can be completed through a combination of basic research, informal consultations with stakeholders, and brainstorming by committee members to answer some basic questions about the participants, such as the following:

- Will the process engage citizens, stakeholders, or both?
- What kinds of questions will they be asked to answer?
- Are they deliberating over fundamental values, priorities, or goals; or is this a discussion about stakeholder interests?
- If so, what are the values or interests at stake?
- Will the participants require any special knowledge, skills, assets or other things that may be important for the process?
- If citizens are to be engaged, will they need be acting as representatives of some larger population?
- If so, what demographic or other qualifications will be important?
- Are their special linguistic or cultural factors that need to be considered?
- Are the time commitments likely to be onerous to participants?
- Will participants need to travel?
- Are there other obstacles that may prevent them from participating, such as disabilities, lack of resources, child care issues, or other commitments?



Ultimately, the participant profiles will be the foundation of the recruitment strategy in Step 2.5. However, that task can't be completed until the engagement process has been designed (Step 2.4). In fact, Steps 2.4 and 2.5 are closely connected so that they are worked out together.



2.3 RECRUIT THE FACILITATOR

Informed Participation processes should be led by an experienced, impartial facilitator. He/ she must embody the principles and rules set out at the beginning of this Guide: transparency, openness, inclusiveness, impartiality, fairness, evidence-informed decision-making, and personal responsibility. Deliberative processes need the participants to work together as a team. This, in turn, requires a high level of trust, both in the process and between the participants. The facilitator is instrumental in building that trust.

To achieve this, Informed Participation distinguishes between three basic roles that a facilitator must play, each of which makes an essential contribution to the process:



The Traffic Cop

As a traffic cop, the facilitator's job is to ensure that:

- The meeting follows the agenda
- Discussions remain on topic and don't get bogged down or wander
- Everyone has a turn to speak and no one dominates the discussion
- The dialogue is moving toward a conclusion
- Online discussions can create new and sometimes surprising rules and practices, which should be discussed and approved by the participants, as they arise



The role ensures the process is focused, well-organized, and well-managed. It ensures that no one dominates the discussion, and that people are free to speak in their own voice. This, in turn, demonstrates why rules are important and must be followed and builds confidence in the agenda, the plan, and the facilitator.



The Referee

As an umpire or referee, the facilitator's job is to ensure that:

- The rules of engagement have been explained
- The participants fully understand the process and the rules
- Participants treat one another with respect and courtesy
- Disagreements are resolved through dialogue, evidence, compromise, and consensus
- Participants who systematically ignore or violate the rules will be called to account

Informed Participation is a rules-based approach to finding solutions. These rules go beyond those used by the traffic cop; they also include, for example, a commitment to evidence-informed decision-making and openness to alternatives. All participants must agree to respect and play by ALL the rules. At the outset of the process, the facilitator normally leads a discussion on proposed rules, which can be modified or rejected by the participants. By the same token, they can and often do add rules of their own. Once the deliberation begins, the facilitator must be careful to apply them impartially and fairly to everyone. To help ensure this, he/she should not come from the process's sponsoring department.



The Guide

As a "Sherpa" or guide, the facilitator's job is to ensure that:

- Participants learn to work together as a team, that is, to collaborate, rather than compete with one another
- Participants speak for the broad interests they have been engaged to represent, rather than their specific organizations or their personal views
- Participants are challenged to reflect on the views they present and to entertain new ones
- The group is regularly invited to stand back and define the big picture that is emerging from their discussion
- The dialogue is moving toward a goal that participants feel is practical and important

Informed Participation is about finding win/wins. This often requires a rethinking and reframing of the issues that divide participants. Informed Participation is about finding ways to re-describe conflicting interests and to allow the participants to overcome their differences. For most people, this is a journey along an uncertain and possibly dangerous path. While it is not the facilitator's place to redefine the issues or propose solutions – that is up to the participants – as the Sherpa, he/she is the expert on the path, that is, in the art of deconstructing and reconstructing arguments and analyses. So, while the Sherpa may be impartial, this doesn't mean he/she is indifferent or disengaged. He/she is a very engaged participant in the discussion, but as someone who can guide the discussion – and expert on the methodology of deliberative engagement – rather than as a stakeholder in the outcome.



2.4 DESIGN THE PROCESS

Designing a public deliberation process is a complex undertaking that must balance many factors. In Informed Participation, these decisions are guided by a process design toolkit, which includes four basic tools:



1. The Terms of Reference:

As we've already seen, this tool sets the parameters for the process.



2. The Process Template:

This establishes continuity across the various stages of a process by ensuring that each stage builds on the one before it in a way that is transparent and fair.



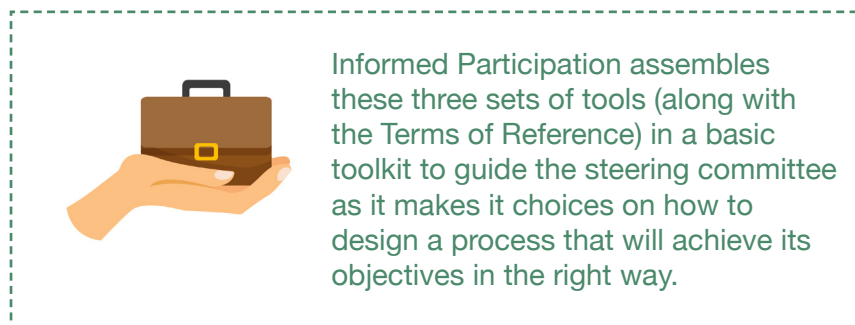
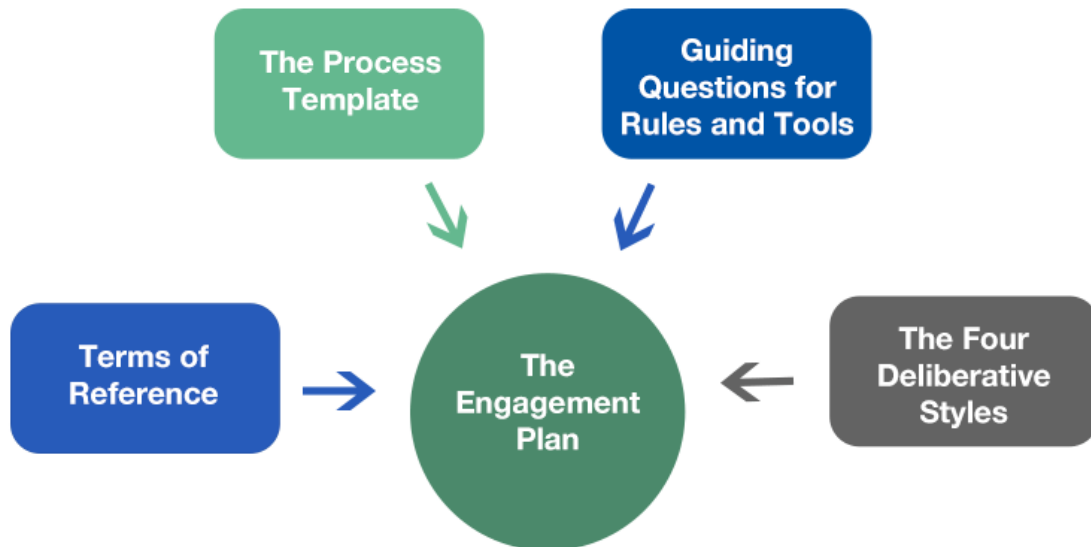
3. The Guiding Questions for Rules and Tools:

“Rules and tools” are introduced as the basic building blocks of a process. (The “tools” referred to here are not these four tools that make up the Design Toolkit. See below.) We then provide seven sets of questions to guide key choices on how and where these building blocks should be used to produce an effective process.



4. The Four Deliberative Styles: Lastly, we consider the role of deliberation styles in helping to shape the overall process.

THE INFORMED PARTICIPATION TOOLKIT FOR PROCESS DESIGN



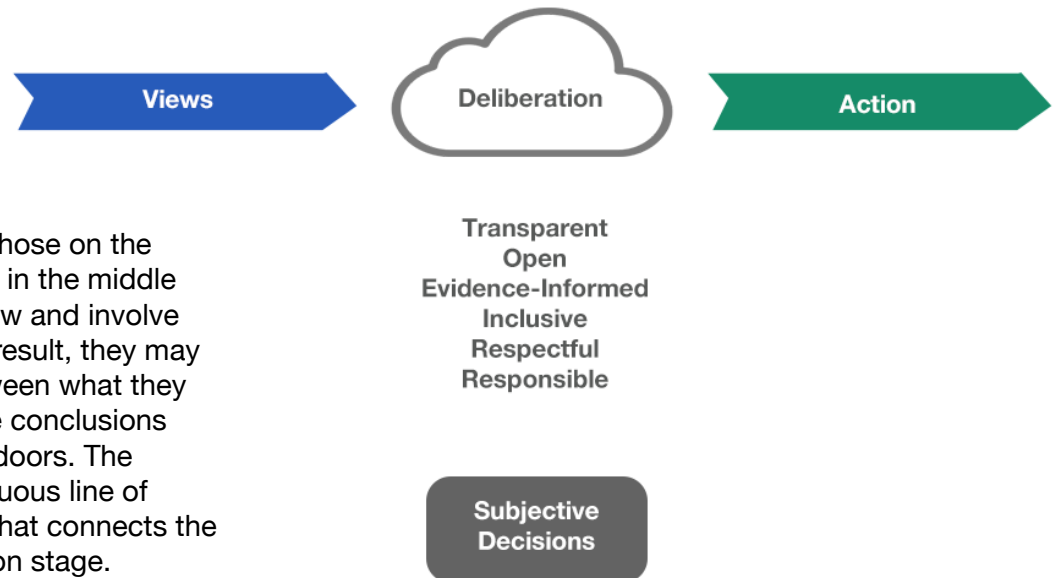
The Process Template

Volume 1 of this series explained how in consultation the deliberation stage is carried out by officials from behind closed doors. We saw that, if the decisions are based on evidence and expertise, the officials should be able to explain and justify them to the public. However, the more subjective these decisions become (i.e. the more they are based on values, priorities, interests, and so on), the more difficult it will be to justify them.

Consider a debate over whether to allow logging in a sensitive ecosystem. In the end, this requires a trade-off between two basic values: creating jobs, on one hand, and preserving the pristine state of the forest, on the other. Evidence can't tell us where the right balance lies. At bottom, the conflict involves subjective differences – values – that must be resolved through dialogue, accommodation, and agreement between the parties.

If these discussions take place behind closed doors and involve only officials, what the public had to say in the views stage and what these officials announce as their findings from the deliberation stage may be separated by a gap that is too large to be acceptable to the public:

THE CHALLENGE OF CONTINUITY

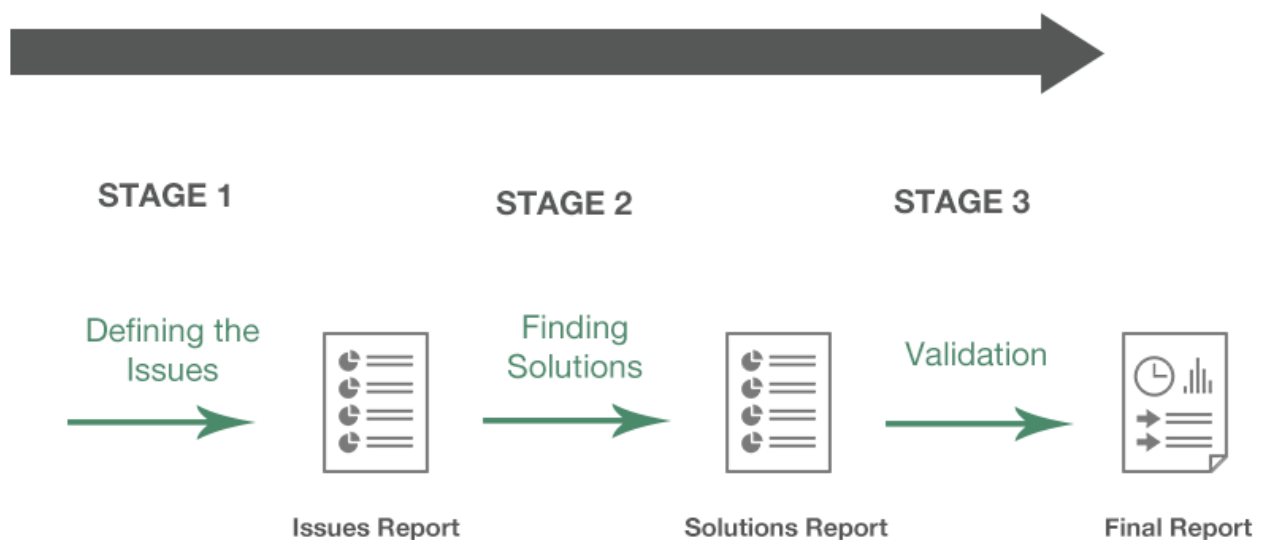


From the perspective of those on the outside, the deliberations in the middle stage are hidden from view and involve subjective choices. As a result, they may see little connection between what they said at the outset and the conclusions arrived at behind closed doors. The process will lack a continuous line of reasoning and evidence that connects the views stage with the action stage.

Informed Participation ensures that all three stages are connected, and that the public can see how each stage builds on the preceding one. The process template below illustrates how this works:

THE INFORMED PARTICIPATION PROCESS TEMPLATE

TIMELINES





Stage 1: Setting the agenda

The views stage gives the public an opportunity to inform officials of their views on the issues and to have them included in an “issues report” at the end of Stage 1. This report consolidates the views and then uses them to define the agenda for deliberation in Stage 2. If this is done well, it should give stakeholders confidence that their views will be addressed in Stage 2.



Stage 2: Finding solutions together

The Stage 2 deliberation follows an agenda set by the issues report; this ensures that issues raised in Stage 1 will be dealt with in Stage 2. Moreover, the Stage 2 deliberation process must respect the basic rules of public deliberation, such as transparency, openness, evidence-informed decision-making, inclusiveness, and so on. This ensures that items on the agenda will be dealt with fairly in Stage 2, and that those on the outside can have confidence in the deliberations:

THE CHALLENGE OF CONTINUITY



Stage 3: Validating the findings

There will be an opportunity to reach out to those who may not have been directly involved in the deliberation stage of the process to ensure there are no serious oversights or conflicts. Basing the process on this template thus ensures that each stage builds on the one before it in a way that is transparent and fair. Ensuring continuity in the process, from beginning to end, is a big part of ensuring its legitimacy and of rebuilding public trust in engagement. However, this is only the first step in designing the process. The real challenge is to populate the three stages with content, events, and people. So, how are these choices to be made?

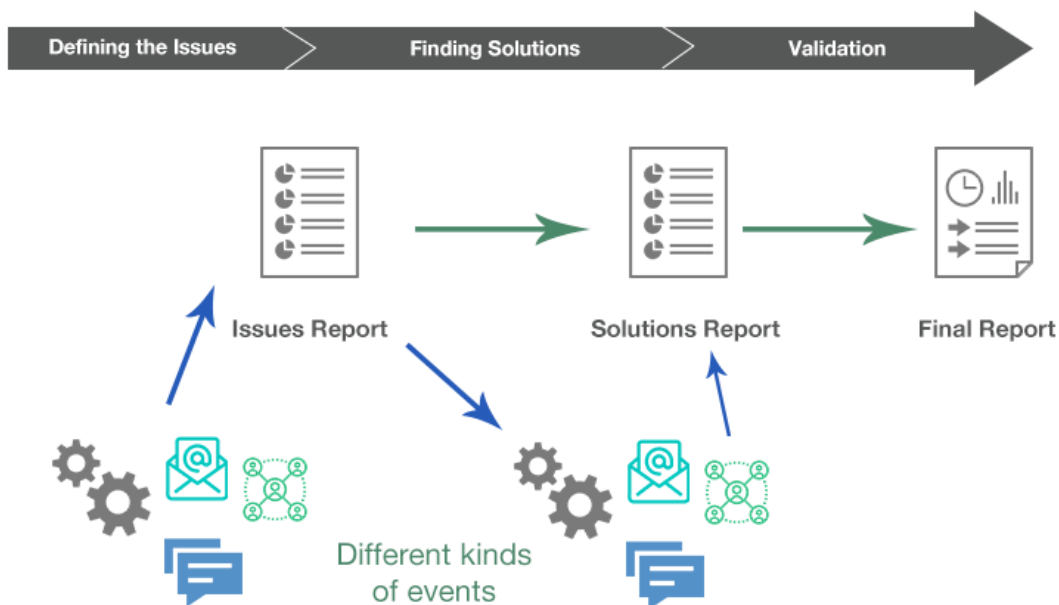
How these rules get applied will, of course, depend on the specific events and other options that are used to create the process. Nevertheless, if the deliberation is to gain people’s trust and have legitimacy, these events must be designed and implemented in ways that respect these rules.



THE GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR RULES AND TOOLS

We've seen that Informed Participation divides the process into three basic stages, each of which is designed to perform special tasks. As the diagram below suggests, each stage is like a mini-process that includes its own series of engagement events, which are connected by rules, and then punctuated with a report that consolidates the work from it, lays the ground for the next stage, and serves as the authoritative record of what was achieved in that stage:

DESIGN OPTIONS



Tools:

These are the events and other devices through which participants engage. They include in-person events, such as town halls, roundtables, information sessions, conferences, debates, speaker series, hearings, or meetings of a deliberation working group. Alternatively, people could be engaged through conference calls, emails, social media exchanges, webcasting, or new technologies, such as [Converlens](#), which uses Artificial Intelligence to scan through massive numbers of documents and harvest important information.

Rules:

Any decisions about process design – such as the adoption of a tool – must respect the fundamental rules of engagement, including transparency, openness, inclusiveness, evidence-informed decision-making, and so on. In principle, rules of all kinds can be added, from who can participate to how decisions will be made. Generally, adding rules makes the process more structured and less flexible.

Tools and rules can be combined in many ways to create public deliberation processes. In the end, a deliberative process really is nothing more than a series of events connected by rules – much like a string of beads. Designing a good process is about mixing and matching rules and tools in artful ways to achieve the main objectives, while respecting the context, available resources, and timelines.

(We should note that these processes also often include objectives of a second kind, which we call “process objectives.” Informed Participation is a very effective instrument for advancing goals such as inclusion, relationship-building, and social cohesion. This is a consequence of the process’s firm commitment to the basic rules set out in 2.6 below and in the protocols listed under the Principle of Trust.)



The seven sets of questions below draw our attention to key elements of the engagement process where design choices must be made. They are a way of consolidating the steering committee's learning from the steps covered so far. They should not be viewed as exhaustive or definitive; rather, they are meant to illustrate the kinds of questions that must be asked and answered in key areas:

1. What are we here to discuss?

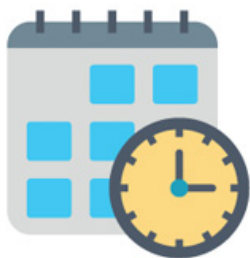
- What are the process objectives?
- What are the issues that must be resolved to achieve the objectives?
- What kinds of decisions (evidence-based or value-based) will participants need to make to resolve the issues?
- Will this require careful analysis or difficult trade-offs?
- Will evidence be needed? If so, is quality and/or quantity available adequate?
- Does the process aim at getting only buy-in on the decisions or a deeper level of ownership?
- What are the constraints on timelines and resources?

2. Who are the participants and how will they be recruited?

- By this stage, the types of participants have likely been defined, (e.g. citizens, experts, government officials who), but who exactly will be invited to participate from those groups?
- Is anyone welcome? Will it be first-come, first-serve or some limited and/or balanced representation, such as by interests, demography, or random selection?
- How many will there be?
- Will they all participate in the same way? Do some have privileges or priority status that others do not, say, with respect to early or special access to documents or information? If so, who and why?
- Are there special conditions they must meet to participate, beyond standing for a key interest, e.g. policy skills, regional or other demographic considerations, education level, availability to attend sessions, and so on?
- What sort of recruitment process will be needed to engage the participants? How will it work? Do they all engage at the same time? Is balanced representation a concern? If so, how will it be ensured?

3. What components (Rules and Tools) will define the process?

- Will all the participants be engaged in the dialogue together or in various groupings, events, or stages? If the latter, how and in what order?
- How many groups, events, or stages will there be? How big are they and how do they link together?
- Will the process need to travel to different cities or regions?
- Will there be lots of events or just a few?
- How many participants will be attending the various events?
- Are there any special reasons they should meet in one way rather than another, e.g. face-to-face rather than online?
- Will there be an online component?
- If so, what kind of tools will be used?
- How will the results be captured?
- Do we need note-takers?
- If different events use different channels (i.e. face-to-face, online, mail, telephone) or are discrete, how do the findings get integrated?
- Will it be the same people or different ones at the various sessions?
- How many people will be involved?
- What are the timelines for the various stages? Are they realistic?
- What kind of resources are available, and will they be adequate?
- How does this stage build on the previous one? Are we ensuring continuity and transparency?
- Are there accessibility issues, say, for different language groups, people with disabilities, parents who will need child care, or people who must travel to get to a meeting or event?
- What kind of administrative or research support is there?
- Are the timelines clear and have adequate resources been secured?



4. How will the Agenda be defined?

- How should the issues be presented to the participants?
- How will the agenda for events be set?
- How will the issues be tackled at various events and/or at different stages in the process?
- Is the process for setting these agendas part of a larger plan for the overall process? If so, how is that being defined and by whom?
- What sort of challenges do the issues pose: sorting, prioritizing, making trade-offs, and so on?
- Will the participants need to be educated/informed on content? Is this expert content or value driven?
- If so, will this require any special instruction or expertise?
- Are there significant disagreements between the participants on the issues?
- Are differences mainly at the values level or do they involve matters of fact, expertise, and evidence?
- Do participants need a decision rule?
- Has everyone had an opportunity to respond to the agenda and make suggestions of their own in a safe and comfortable space?
- Does the agenda fairly represent the issues around the topic?
- Have the research sources been documented, and can they be made available to the participants?

5. How will the Process Report?

- What kinds of reports will be used and for what purposes?
- Who owns them?
- How many will there be?
- How will they be produced? Is there a rolling draft?
- Will they meet the appropriate standards for transparency?

6. How will the Results be Validated?

- What steps will be needed to ensure that the findings from each stage are validated?
- How will the findings be incorporated into succeeding stages?
- How will the results be validated?

7. Are the Sponsors and Decision-Makers in Agreement with the Plan?

- Have the decision-makers been informed on the process?
- How well do they understand it?
- Are they clear on the rules of engagement?
- Are they clear on the risks/benefits?
- How much confidence do they have in the process?
- Is everyone clear and agreed on participants' scope for decision-making?



PUBLIC DELIBERATION WORKING GROUPS – A SPECIAL TOOL

A key challenge for deliberative processes is to ensure focus, continuity, and balance in the discussions. The more people and events a process includes, the more difficult this becomes. Discussions can fragment and wander, new topics or issues may be introduced as a process moves from event to event, or the conclusions may begin to skew toward certain interests at the expense of others.

To help prevent this, many processes use a **deliberation working group** to anchor the discussion. This is a relatively small group of participants who are charged with carrying out specific deliberative tasks. How many and how big these tasks will be will depend on the process. The group's role may be limited to a few key points in the process or it may be active through the entire process. Some processes are composed of nothing but a single working group; others use a variety of tools to engage people, of which the working group is only one.

There is no fixed list of criteria for designing working groups; every process is different and much depends on the objectives and context. Ideally, design choices for a working group will promote focus, continuity, and balance, while ensuring the group can deal effectively with any special challenges posed by the issues it faces.

An ideal size is usually about 20 - 25 members. This is large enough to ensure key interests can be represented, while also being mindful of the difficulties of sustaining difficult discussions with large numbers of people.

Although working groups offer great advantages, designers should remain attentive to a concern around them. Many people outside the group will be looking to see how effectively it represents their interests or concerns. To accept the working group's conclusions as legitimate, they must feel that someone in the group speaks for them; and they must be confident that person's views are being treated fairly and respectfully by the group. In short, the working group's credibility often turns on how fairly and effectively it represents the population it claims to speak for. Getting this right is critical.





In part, success will depend on the quality of the participant profiles. They must accurately represent key interests, demographic features, or other relevant factors that should be reflected in the discussion. The criteria that define participants must be carefully selected. Further, when someone is invited to participate in a working group that person is expected to act as a spokesperson or representative for all those people outside the process who are captured by the profile. The participant must agree to speak fairly and fully for the interests he/she has been asked to represent, rather than for his/her home organization. Only then will people outside the process feel confident they have someone in the group who speaks for them.

So, along with the Terms of Reference, we have added a few more tools to our toolkit, including:

- A three-stage process template to frame the dialogue;
- Some “tools and rules” from which to construct the process;
- Seven sets of questions to help us make choices regarding the tools and rules; and
- Public engagement working groups as a special tool for accomplishing key tasks.

To complete the Informed Participation toolkit, we must still add one more set of tools: the four deliberative styles.

THE FOUR DELIBERATIVE STYLES

The opening section of this paper identified four different styles of deliberative processes, which are integral to Informed Participation (these are described at greater length in Volume I of this series, *Public Deliberation: Bringing Policy-Making Out from Behind Closed Doors*):



Open Dialogue



Narrative-Building



Deliberative Analysis



The Blended Approach

We call these deliberative “styles” because they identify natural patterns that dialogue processes follow. For example, some dialogues use lots of narrative or storytelling, while others are far more focused on facts and analysis. Features like these are critical when designing a process. If the goal is to solve a difficult technical problem, facts and analysis will matter. If the goal is to solve a deep values conflict, narrative may be the better option.

We can build features like these into the process by using the Rules and Tools to shape a process in ways that favour the emergence of one style, rather than another. The next four sections provide sketches of some key features of each of the four styles.



Open Dialogue

Most people know intuitively that when joining a discussion, they should listen to others, explore different lines of reasoning, weigh evidence, and work toward reasonable compromises and/or trade-offs. Dialogue is a basic human skill that involves rules, as do sharing a meal or walking along a crowded street. An open dialogue process capitalizes on this skill. In effect, the process brings people together and asks them to use these skills to discuss a topic.

Thus, for the most part, participants are expected to monitor their own behaviour and manage their own discussions. Official rules are kept to a minimum, the goals are often quite open-ended, and participants receive only light facilitation. Norms like assessing evidence or inclusiveness are expected to apply, but more as an aspiration than a rule.

Given the relatively relaxed atmosphere, open dialogue is not likely to produce detailed analyses, difficult trade-offs, or complex agreements. The facilitator rarely pushes people beyond where their own intuitions take them. In addition, these discussions usually rely more on narrative and storytelling than analysis and evidence, facts and data. This means the findings are usually less rigorous, from a “scientific” perspective. People tend to give an example or tell a story to make a point, engage in a bit of discussion about it, then agree or disagree.

Nevertheless, this informal style has important strengths and can be a huge asset for certain tasks, such as:

- Identifying points of convergence/divergence in people’s views
- Exploring and testing ideas, issues, and solutions to issues
- Testing the depth of people’s commitment to different positions
- Raising awareness and building understanding
- Building cohesion among stakeholders and/or the public
- Legitimizing broad decisions, such as priority-setting
- Building a sense of ownership of a solution

Finally, from a design and delivery viewpoint, open dialogue processes are usually relatively easy to organize and deliver. They can accommodate lots of participants, often with very diverse backgrounds. They can be scaled easily, often just by adding more events, inviting more people, and keeping a careful record of what has been said. Analysts can use their notes from different meetings to compile a single, comprehensive report of the findings.

Deliberative Analysis



Deliberative analysis is more regimented than open dialogue. The process is designed to steer the dialogue toward clear decisions, such as setting priorities or making trade-offs between competing interests. The process usually requires an explicit commitment from the participants to abide by basic rules, such as inclusiveness, objectivity, fairness, and evidence-informed decision-making.

A facilitator ensures that the rules are followed and that everyone is treated fairly. Impartial experts may be engaged to provide background information on the topic, but in ways that show no bias on the issue.

Because the process demands a high level of effort, commitment, learning, and compromise, it often builds a strong sense of ownership among participants.

On the downside, these processes can be labour- and resource-intensive, from the selection of participants to the preparation of briefing materials. They are also usually restricted to a smaller number of participants. The larger the process, the more difficult it is to maintain rigour, which makes these processes very difficult to scale and means those on the outside of the process sometimes feel excluded. Finally, given the rigour of the analysis, the rationale for decisions can be complex and hard to explain to the broader public.



When non-experts participate in dialogue processes, they often rely on examples or tell a story to make their point. This contrasts with policy professionals, who usually make recommendations, based on facts, analysis and data.

Narrative is an extremely powerful engagement tool. Storytelling explains change in a way that people not only grasp and remember, but that resonates with their experience. It speaks to people's emotional intelligence as well as their intellect. A good narrative not only tells people what a new environment looks like – what is there, how it will work, what it will achieve – it gives them a visceral sense of what is at stake: what we are aspiring to, what challenges must be overcome to achieve it, how this will be done and who are our allies and adversaries.

From an engagement viewpoint, narratives give people a mental picture of a new situation or environment (what is there, how it will work, what it will achieve) and a visceral sense of what is at stake (what they are aspiring to, what challenges must be overcome to achieve it, how this will be done and who are their allies and adversaries). It channels a person's or community's lived experience and helps create a sense of shared purpose around it. Stories help us find shared purpose and bind us together within communities of all kinds.

Storytelling also helps ensure the results of a dialogue will reach the broader public in a form they understand; people love to share their stories and to hear new ones. Stories also stay with people in a way that facts and arguments don't.

When it comes to decision-making, there are two basic ways of creating narratives and putting them to work. In more "top-down" approaches, decision-makers devise a story, then use communications techniques to get the group to "buy-in" or accept it.

Informed Participation is a bottom-up approach that uses dialogue to create a narrative. A larger story is built up from the narrative elements people bring to the discussion: goals, characters, tensions, solutions, ways of evaluating actions (e.g. praise and blame), and much more. This gives community members an essential role in shaping the narrative, which, in turn, creates a sense of "ownership" of it and of the consequences that flow from it – such as decisions.

Scenario planning is one well-known technique for narrative-building (Volume 1 provides a case study). This is where a group of people consider current and historic trends and events, make certain assumptions about the future, and then work through the consequences together to develop a story of possible future situations. The development of different scenarios helps to identify possible pathways towards a vision of the future.

Scenario planning is a widely used and very effective tool for tasks such as strategic planning for an organization or community. The scenarios define a path forward in an accessible form that allows large numbers of people to identify with and adopt the plan. It can serve as a powerful rallying point to mobilize people and give them a sense of ownership of the pathway.

On the downside, the views that get incorporated into such a plan may be based on unreliable information, stereotypes, or cultural biases, which can reinforce or promote unwanted values or views.



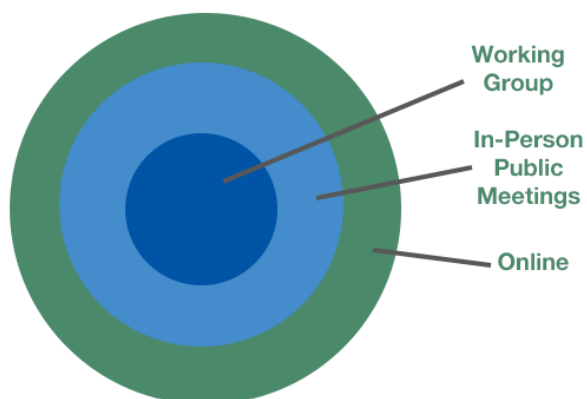


A Blended Style

The fourth deliberative style maximizes some of the strengths of the first three by getting all three of them working together. This is done by creating separate spaces for open dialogue and deliberative analysis, then aligning the two dialogues through development of a shared narrative.

The discussion in Volume 1 (Public Deliberation: Getting Policy-Making Out from behind Closed Doors) includes a case study of this style of engagement. The model there uses three relatively distinct sub-processes or **dialogue streams**, each of which includes a larger number of people:

1. A working group is established, which might include, say, 25 members. These could be citizens, community stakeholders, government officials, or some combination of all three.
2. The process also includes an in-person stream, which will engage community members through town halls, roundtables, information sessions and other in-person meetings.
3. Finally, there is an online stream where anyone can post ideas and information or exchange views with others at any time of the day or night.



The working group is effectively a forum for deliberative analysis. It will meet as needed to deliberate on key issues in a more formal and rigorous way. By contrast, the in-person and online streams are designed to promote open dialogue among community members.

Although these three streams are relatively separate, the process is designed to ensure they interact and complement one another. More specifically, alignment between them is nurtured through development of a shared narrative that integrates the analytical findings of the working group with the story-telling from the open dialogues.



The process creates an ongoing dialogue – a deliberation – between the three streams that allows the community to focus and articulate its views on an issue in a way that is both inclusive and informed. Through this process, deliberation is thus scaled to the community level, which is now engaged effectively in public deliberation through the narrative. Finally, community members will feel a sense of ownership of the decisions arrived at by the working group.

A blended approach thus has important benefits: it can engage lots of people, give them a sense of shared ownership of the project, and ensures that decision-making is rigorous and fair. However, the process can be complex, requiring more time, resources, and effort to complete. As with any engagement process, it is crucial to ensure the design choice fits the purpose.



2.5 DEVELOP THE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Section 2.3 involved the drafting of participant profiles. Now that the process has been defined it is possible to review the work done on the profiles and see how well it fits with the proposed process, to make any required adjustments and, finally, to draft the recruitment strategy for the participants. Depending on the process, this could be as simple as an announcement in local media of an event or something far more complex, such as inviting people to submit their names and profiles, then selecting a predetermined number of participants through a lottery.



2.6 ADOPT SUCCESS MEASURES/ INDICATORS

Evaluation: substantive objectives vs. process objectives

At the end of the engagement cycle, we should step back and ask what the experience teaches us about the relationships involved and how to improve our use of public deliberation. This is very different from conventional evaluation.

Conventional performance measures fall into two categories: those based on client satisfaction and those based on the achievement of goals (outcomes). Measuring satisfaction usually involves tools that rely on a subjective assessment of service quality, such as satisfaction surveys. People who receive the service are asked to reflect on their experience of it and then to rate it. This is a reliable way to evaluate service quality.

When it comes to measuring outcomes, however, subjective impressions are highly unreliable. Outcomes refer to how things are in the world, independently of what we feel about them. Outcome measures, therefore, need to be objective. Typically, they are based on either scientific knowledge, such as the measures for health or environmental outcomes, or knowledge from the social sciences and humanities, such as measures for innovation or other forms of economic and social change.

Informed Participation uses public deliberation to achieve substantive outcomes, so these processes will need appropriate outcome measures to evaluate their success. Where services are involved, satisfaction surveys may also be required. Identifying the right measures can be complicated and may require advice from experts in the field. This is neither unusual nor a surprise. However, conventional measures won't give us the full picture. These processes also need to be evaluated on a second level: **the process objectives.**



Process objectives aim to change some important aspect of the relationship between the parties in the process. Examples include inclusiveness, learning, or trust. For example, a poverty reduction process might take special steps to engage marginalized communities like the homeless. The process objective here – inclusion – aims at strengthening the relationship between the homeless and other stakeholders and/or governments in the process. Participation in deliberative process can result in important benefits like this, especially if the process is expected to last through several cycles (see Section 2.6, The Cyclical Approach).

To get the information we need for these tasks, the deliberative part of the process must be separated from the rest and evaluated apart; we need reliable indicators that define and measure the conditions for a successful dialogue.

In fact, we know a lot about what makes dialogue successful. After all, we have been engaging in it since the beginning of civilization. Over time we’ve become quite skilled at judging how well dialogue is working within a relationship, such as friendships, business partnerships and marriages. If we were not, we would have a hard time knowing when a marriage or business relationship was prospering and when it was in trouble. Although we can certainly be deceived for a time, we can usually spot a dialogue that is going badly. When we do, we tend to withdraw our trust in the person(s) involved, at which time the dialogue usually breaks down. In short, even if we have never tried to list the conditions that lead to successful dialogue, we have a reliable intuitive knowledge what they are.

Before listing them, let’s note that evaluation is not something that happens only at the end of the project. It should also be happening during the process. At the end of each stage in the process, the Steering Committee should use the Evaluation Framework (below) to assess their progress toward the goals, ensure the process is on track, and respond to unforeseen circumstances, big or small, much as a driver on a busy highway adjusts his speed and position to changing traffic or weather conditions, or unexpected obstacles or interruptions, to keep moving toward the destination. Continuous evaluation is vital for effective implementation.

An Evaluation Framework for Informed Participation

This evaluation framework for Informed Participation is based on six conditions for successful public deliberation, which have been drawn from experience. First and foremost, effective deliberation requires trust, which is the primary condition and is the overarching principle set out at the beginning of this paper. The other five conditions support trust by interacting in ways that help to build trust, and thereby create the conditions for successful dialogue.

Together, these six conditions are:



1. Trust



2. Evidence-Informed Decision-Making



3. Openness



4. Mutual Respect



5. Inclusiveness



6. Personal Responsibility

Let’s consider each one separately.



2. The Key Performance Indicator for Evidence-Informed Decisions

Evidence ensures that claims can be fairly assessed and that the dialogue is grounded in truth.

Evidence-informed decision-making recognizes that evidence is often incomplete and reasonable people can still disagree, but that the norm of providing a fairly assessing evidence is a critical part of public deliberation.



1. The Key Performance Indicator for Trust

Trust is demonstrated by a high level of willingness among the parties to continue working together to build the partnership.

Trust is the starting point of any sustainable dialogue. Without it there will be no willingness to engage in a real exchange and the process will stall. In the end, the acid test of a successful partnership is the willingness of the partners to continue to work together and, perhaps, to expand the partnership. Depending on the partnership, a wide range of more specific indicators can be drawn from this. For example, they might include:

- willingness to continue meeting and to view the dialogue as a cyclical process;
- belief that the process is working; and
- agreement to expand the partnership into new areas.



3. The Key Performance Indicator for Openness

Openness is demonstrated by a willingness to share views, information and knowledge relevant to the dialogue.

Openness encourages self-examination, the weighing of evidence, the willingness to share information and ideas and to search for new opportunities and solutions. While much of this will focus on government, these indicators also apply to the partners outside government. Examples of indicators might include:

- number of relevant documents made available to the partners;
- willingness to provide regular briefings and updates to each other; and
- willingness to share plans, directions, concerns and other things that may shape behaviour



4. The Key Performance Indicator for Mutual Respect

Mutual respect is demonstrated by a willingness to seriously entertain alternative views.

Mutual respect ensures that the partners will listen to one another and that there will be give and take. Evidence of mutual respect is provided by real changes and adjustments in the partners' existing views, goals, policies, practices and so on. Indicators might include the number and scope of changes in position resulting from the dialogue process.

While these are sometimes hard to pin down, they are nevertheless crucial indicators of an authentic dialogue process. One place to look for them is in the reports from collaborative processes. Each report contains a summary of the discussions, points of view, positions and so on, which have been expressed during the dialogue. As the dialogue progresses, particularly through several cycles, comparisons of past reports with present positions may show how various parties' positions have evolved as a result of the dialogue.



5. The Key Performance Indicator for Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness is demonstrated through public agreement that the right people are represented in the dialogue.

Inclusiveness ensures that all those with a real stake in the service are represented in the dialogue. It is difficult to know exactly where the boundaries of an issue lie.

In part, this will be a decision made by the process planners. Nevertheless, it is not arbitrary or just up to them. If there are organizations or individuals left out of the process, but who insist they should be part of it, this is a strong indication that the boundaries have been drawn too narrowly. By the same token, if there are people or organizations inside the process who are never sure why they are there, this is an indication that the boundaries have been drawn too widely.



6. The Key Performance Indicator for Personal Responsibility

Personal responsibility is demonstrated by a willingness of the people involved in the collaboration to assign themselves tasks based on the findings of the dialogue process.

A sense of personal responsibility is necessary to ensure that the dialogue is not just about talk, but that the parties will seek to understand their roles and fulfil their responsibilities.

The most obvious place to look for indications that this standard is being met is in the action

plan, though other sources are also important. Specific indicators might include the willingness of participants to:

- contribute time or resources to supporting the process;
- recruit new members to the process;
- spend time with others in their normal spheres of contact to inform them of the work underway and to gather their input;
- communicate the findings of the process to others in their network; and
- defend the process against partisan attacks or criticism.

A Measurement Table

These six factors are mutually reinforcing and, as the process evolves, they will strengthen and enhance one another. Indeed, these conditions form a circle that returns us to trust. If trust is not present, the process may never get going. However, the other five conditions work together to build trust so that, if they are met, trust is enhanced, which, in turn, supports a more robust commitment to the other five conditions. As the cycle continues, trust builds and the participants commitment to these other conditions is strengthened. These six conditions can be used to create an evaluation framework for collaboration that includes benchmarks and specific indicators for any process.

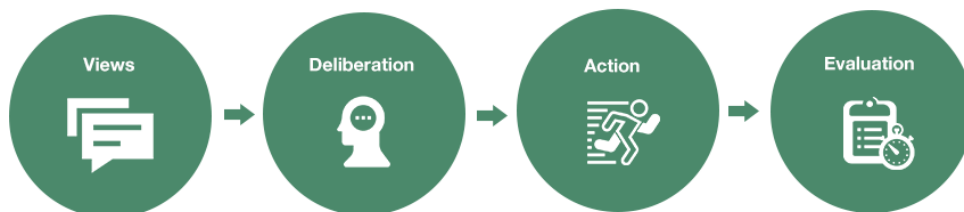


SUCCESS CONDITIONS	Trust	Evidence	Openness	Mutual Respect	Inclusiveness	Responsibility
KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	High level of willingness of the parties to continue the dialogue	Willingness to modify views in response to (and in accordance with) evidence	Increased sharing of views, information and knowledge relevant to the dialogue	Real changes in views, goals, policies, practices	Agreement that the right people are present in the process	Willingness to self-assign tasks based on the dialogue process
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	<p>Willingness to continue meeting and to see the dialogue as a cyclical process</p> <p>Belief that the process is working</p> <p>Agreement to expand partnership into new areas</p>	<p>Number of time views have changed when evidence was presented</p> <p>Willingness to recognize different forms of evidence, including lived experience (where appropriate)</p>	<p>Number of relevant documents made available to the partners</p> <p>Willingness to provide regular briefings and updates to each other</p> <p>Willingness to share plans, directions, concerns and other things that may shape behaviour</p>	<p>Number and scope of changes in positions resulting from the dialogue process</p>	<p>No people or organizations outside the process demanding that they be a part of it</p> <p>No people or organizations inside the process who feel they have no real role in it</p>	<p>Willingness to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contribute time or resources to supporting the process recruit new members to the process spend time with others in your network informing them of the work underway and getting their input communicate the findings of the process to others in your network defend the process against partisan attacks or criticism



The Cyclical Approach

Many Informed Participation engagement processes will achieve their basic goal in one “cycle.” For example, the objective of the process on Ontario’s Condominium Act (see Volume 1) was to amend a specific law. Once that was achieved, the Steering Committee evaluated the initiative, then disbanded, as nothing further was required. We can represent the various stages of the process as follows:



Not all Informed Participation processes work this way. Some objectives, such as planning a major urban development initiative, may take numerous rounds of deliberation to complete. Others, like promoting community health or environmental protection, are never fully achieved. They are always a work in progress.

In such cases, Informed Participation requires a **cyclical approach**. This begins with a smaller piece of the bigger objective, works through that piece, and then frames the next piece, and starts again. After each cycle, the Steering Committee evaluates the progress, sees what lessons have been learned, and moves on to new objectives in a second cycle. Once the second cycle has been completed, it will evaluate, then start a third cycle, and so on, as follows:

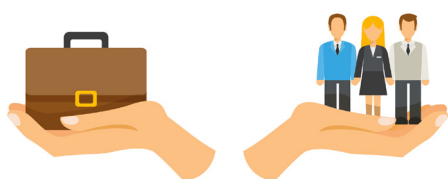




So, a community policing unit that wants to promote safer streets might start by launching a process to encourage people to keep an eye on their streets and report suspicious people or events. Once that is done, a second cycle might promote the formation of neighbourhood teams to provide escort services to walk people home at night. Focusing each cycle on a clearly defined, achievable set of objectives rather than one that it is too ambitious helps ensure the process isn't overwhelmed by the scale of the challenge and doesn't get bogged down in planning.

Cyclical processes are important to Informed Participation because those involved can benefit from learning and capacity-building. As the participants work together to complete these cycles, they will deepen their common interests, expand their shared language, clarify issues and opportunities, and build new tools, systems, and practices to support public deliberation. As a result, the working relationships between participants will become stronger, values and goals shift, there will be a history of successes, and openness and trust will grow – both among participants and between them and the government. Each cycle should get faster, easier, and more productive.

The Evaluation Framework outlined above can be extremely helpful here. It can help planners assess where effort and attention are needed to build the relationships on which a successful project often depends. This brings us to a further stage in engagement, which we call **collaboration**.



From Deliberation to Collaboration

Informed Participation helps decision-makers solve complex issues by engaging the public in making trade-offs, setting objectives, and so on. However, this will not be enough to fully resolve some issues. Imagine a local government that wants to recruit parents, neighbours, local police, community organizations, and schools to help prevent youth crime. The mayor might point out their shared interest in the goal and call on them to work together with government to help achieve it. They may be invited to help create a shared plan to align their efforts around the shared goal. This allows them to achieve together what none of them can achieve alone – not even government.

They would participate in such an initiative in various ways, depending on their skills, resources and availability. For example, they might serve as mentors, organize sports leagues, sponsor youth events, or participate in neighbourhood watch initiatives.

Collaboration involves a commitment between people, organizations, and governments to coordinate their efforts and the use of their resources to achieve a shared goal. Public deliberation plays a critical role in getting this right. The public participates fully in all three stages of the process:

- In the views stage, participants have a chance to state their preferred options - to “get their views on the table.”
- In the deliberation stage, they work together to identify the conditions that must be addressed to achieve their goal, identify what resources are available to help them, and form a plan to put the resources to work.
- In the action stage, they assign roles and responsibilities for implementing the plan.

PROCESS-TYPE: COLLABORATION



PUBLIC/GOVERNMENT



Combining the Cyclical and Collaborative Approaches

Collaboration is already making an important contribution to social goals like crime prevention, poverty reduction, and health promotion. It is equally important for other policy areas, such as climate change management, workforce adjustment, new technological frontiers such as Artificial Intelligence, and transportation. While municipalities are currently leaders in using collaboration to engage the public, often in the form of community partnerships, all governments should consider adding this tool to their toolbox. Indeed, the more complex and interdependent issues become, the more we believe governments will need collaboration to find and deliver effective solutions.



2.7 DRAFT THE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

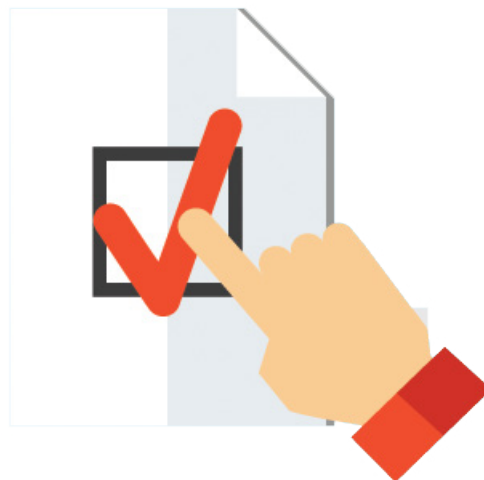
The final step in Stage 2 is to consolidate the findings and decisions from the previous six steps in a single document: The Engagement Plan. This plan, it should be noted, defines how the process is supposed to unfold and how it is to be evaluated. In effect, it already contains much of the direction needed for implementation and evaluation, which means these sections of the Guide and be relatively short and direct.





3. IMPLEMENT THE PROCESS

Stage 3 is about implementing the engagement plan. As noted, the main steps of the process will already have been identified in the plan so, unless something goes wrong, implementation shouldn't require many strategic decisions. It is mainly an operational task. Still, it would be a mistake to assume that execution is uncomplicated or robotic. Processes are always moving—often at high speed—so that the relationships and circumstance within them are always changing and evolving. Keeping the process on course requires knowledge, skill, and good judgement, as well as a capacity to react quickly and effectively to unforeseen circumstances, much like driving a car on a busy freeway.



How well are we executing the plan?

When implementing the plan, the steering committee should be assessing all aspects of the process to see that it is unfolding as it should. Evaluation is not just something that happens at the end of the project. It must be continuous and occur in real time. Committee members should be using the evidence at hand—data, feedback from stakeholders and hard-headed observations—to steer and adjust the process, as needed:

- Are participants clear on the objectives, the process, and their roles in it?
- Is the process providing them the opportunity to play their assigned roles?
- Are key values such as inclusiveness, transparency, and openness being met at each stage?
- Are the results from events, surveys, interviews, etc. being adequately captured?
- Are the findings meeting expectations?
- Are the findings from different events being linked?
- Are online tools integrated with face-to-face processes?
- If there is a facilitator(s), is he/she performing well?
- Are dialogue sequences making progress? Are there any signs of confrontation, polarization of views or fundamental disagreements?
- Do successive stages of the process build on one another?
- Were there any surprises in reports from different events or stages?

Are we prepared for the unexpected?

An engagement plan is at best a guide to what needs to be done. Events often arise that require adjustment to the plan or, in some cases, a full-scale departure from it, such as a major shift in the decision-makers plans. Committee members should be prepared for such interruptions. They can and do occur; when they do, flexibility and improvisation will be critical, but the committee must resist any impulse to revert to a command-and-control style of decision-making. Participants must be made aware of the reasons for any adjustments and, where appropriate, consulted. Changes that are imposed on the process without explanation (transparency) undermine trust.

Are we leveraging our networks to learn about the unknown?

Part of the ongoing work of engagement should be to liaise with participants or other stakeholders outside the process to gather information that might allow the steering committee to anticipate important shifts or changes, and to ensure a high level of readiness for such events when they come.



4. EVALUATE THE RESULTS

What steps can we take to improve the overall relationship?

This final step in the process is for the steering committee to use the Evaluation Framework from Step 2.6 to evaluate the process and see what lessons can be learned about the relationships between those in the process. The Framework is built on the **Principle of Trust**, which was defined as a complex condition made up of five other “success conditions:” evidence, openness, mutual respect, inclusiveness and personal responsibility. These enabling conditions interact and can be used to strengthen one another. The key question at this stage is: **How effectively has the engagement process been used to build trust and can this be improved in the future?** What lessons can be learned, and what best practices can be harvested?



The key question at this stage is: **How effectively have we used this engagement process build trust and can this be improved in the future?** What are there any lessons learned or best practices that could be harvested?

- How open were the relationships between the participants or between them and government?
- Were relevant documents were made available to the partners?
- Was there are willingness to share plans, directions, concerns, and other information?
- Were there any voices missing from the discussions?
- Did everyone get an equal chance to speak and be heard?
- Did the participants meet frequently enough?
- Was there a willingness among the participants and/or government to consider other views?
- Did the process make any unreasonable or unnecessary demands on participants, say, with respect to their time or their privacy?
- Were participants willing to deliver on any commitments they made?
- Should the stakeholders be engaged in the evaluation phase, say, through a meeting to review and discuss the process and its results?
- Is the relationship underperforming in any way?