



The IAP2 2003 Conference

Information to Empowerment: A Global Perspective

**Ottawa, Ontario
May 19-22, 2003**

www.iap2.org

Summary Notes

by

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Overview

IAP2's 2003 conference took place in Ottawa, Canada, from May 19-22, 2003 with pre-conference training workshops offered from May 16-19. Over 200 participants came from as far away as Australia, Korea, Thailand and closer to home, the United States. There were several Canadian delegates, from all across the country, including British Columbia, Alberta and of course, Ottawa.

The conference program was full, with both plenary and series of concurrent workshop sessions. On the second day of the conference, Community Forums gave delegates an opportunity to go out into the local community to observe first-hand how some organizations involve the public in their work. CPRN had the pleasure to receive over 30 conference delegates to our offices and has prepared a separate report on that experience (available on our web site at www.cprn.org/public involvement).

Notes from a selection of sessions (in the order they occurred in the conference program - see www.iap2.org)

Opening Plenary Session: Information to Empowerment: A Global Perspective, Panel, May 20, 8:30 – 10:15 a.m.

Panelists: Carolyn Lukensmeyer, President, AmericaSpeaks
Carolyn Bennett, MD and MP
Ross Parker, Trans...

Moderator: Mary Pat McKinnon, Director, Public Involvement Network, CPRN

The purpose behind this opening panel was to lay out different perspectives on public participation, including those drawn from the field of participation, industry, and government.

Dr. Lukensmeyer opened the session by surveying the conference participants in terms of their sector and geography to demonstrate the diversity in the room. With that ice-breaker, Dr. Lukensmeyer presented her democratic governance model, which triangulates the market (industry), government (the public sector) and civil society (not-for-profit organizations), in the centre of which is the public, composed of unorganized and unaffiliated citizens, who form a distinct key democratic governance constituency. She pointed out the need when adopting a global perspective to keep other voices alive and well, particularly when they are not in the room. "Connecting citizens", the theme of her remarks, is an imperative to improving democracy as is the need for new governance democratic structures or institutions because the old institutions represent a world that no longer exists. Hierarchy has given way to horizontality and accountabilities in the business world are now demanded of the public sector. We need to call upon or develop the capacity to imagine these new structures for the future that we will co-create, she suggested. This will lead to a fairer and more just and inclusive society with every living being treated with respect and governance mechanisms which are capable of including every living voice. In the search, she told us, we need to think always on two levels, system change and individual behavioural change. For her, the Canadian government has done this in its policy stand with regard to the Kyoto Protocol as both government and citizens have a role to play in meeting the Kyoto targets. She spoke about the four conventional wisdoms of engagement, the

myths, which suggest that the public is apathetic and unengaged; the public is not capable of dealing with complex policy issues; the public will always put their own narrow interests first and 'I will lose power if I share with the public'. In fact, public participation practitioners understand full well that sharing power gives more power. She criticized the business model of power which is a zero-sum game, and destructive. Dr. Lukensmeyer described the AmericaSpeaks model of citizen engagement and affirmed that it goes beyond the widely used methods of public participation towards public deliberation and citizen engagement.

Learn more about AmericaSpeaks at www.americaspeaks.com

Ross Parker, Director, Southern Ontario and Quebec Region for TransCanada PipeLines Ltd., a pipeline and power company operating in the northern tier of North America, demonstrated the role communications and outreach plays in developing necessary relationships between industry and municipalities and homeowners. The consultations his company has undertaken have gone a long way in bringing together stakeholders and the public, which in his case, are the landowners and tenants. The methods the company deploys to determine how successful their outreach and involvement activities are include third-party surveys. The results show that the company is trusted and has a good reputation with the public and key stakeholders. Through its public outreach and involvement program, the company is able to respect its policy of "community responsibility".

You can learn more about TransCanada Pipeline Ltd.'s Community Connections efforts at the company's web site www.transcanada.com

Dr. Carolyn Bennett concluded the panel presentations. She explored the theme of 'citizen as partner', against the backdrop of democracy in the information age. She suggested that if the objective is good government, which according to Ursula Franklin, is fair, transparent and takes citizens seriously, there is a lot of work to do in Canada to counter the wall of cynicism. Democratic reform is needed, with parliamentary reform one priority element. In looking at parliamentary reform, one should be striving to ensure a space for citizens to discuss ideas. She spoke about the polarized appetite for citizen engagement between elites and citizens and the inequitable distribution of power. Delving into the different levels of engagement as identified by the OECD, ranging from information to engagement and active participation, she then described the engagement initiatives she has undertaken in her Toronto riding of St. Paul's. She discussed the roles of Parliament and MPs in this era of e-democracy and cited Stephen Coleman who has written that "Parliament's role is emerging as that of a mediator between the voice of the public and the government." She also described some of the work she has been doing online and suggested that there is a lot of work to do to bring many of her MP colleagues up to speed with the new information and communication technologies. She concluded with the view that the integrated approach between communications and consultations taken by the Romanow Commission is the new benchmark for Parliament to match in terms of engaging citizens in the nation's public policy business.

Dr. Carolyn Bennett can be reached through her web site at www.carolynbennett.com. At the home page, you can click to read a copy of her remarks.

There was time only for a few questions, one directed at each of the panelists. To Dr. Bennett, one asked how she sustains her energy and focus. In her response, she suggested that progress

inspires. She is no longer dealing with the whether; it's the how. She asks herself and others the question: "What would it look like if we did it (public involvement) right? Her reference point now seems to be the Romanow Commission consultation approach.

To Dr. Lukensmeyer, one asked about the fourth leg of the stool – the public. Carolyn suggested that we consider the three points of the triangle – market, government and not-for-profit organizations – as having to be accountable to the unstructured and unorganized voices of citizens. And what are the challenges? One is the need to create institutional structures to accommodate the general public to overcome their perceived if not real difficulty to influence policy. Conceptually, there is a need to consider the container, the content and the process, to have effective citizen engagement. In Canada, such a structure might be the Health Council as recommended by Commissioner Romanow, which has yet to be established. In Denmark, there is the Danish Technology Board, which might serve as a model.

To Ross Parker, a question was asked about the evaluation of the company's work with its neighbours. Ross's response pointed to the firm understanding in the company that working well with the company's neighbours makes smart business sense. The process has led to changes in process and in communications with the community.

**Collaboration between the Office of Consumer and Public Involvement
in Health Canada and the Best Medicines Coalition in developing
a Patient Involvement Strategy, May 20, 10:30 a.m. to noon**

Presenters: Roger Farley, Director General, Office of Consumer and Public Involvement (OCAPI), Health Canada, Jacinthe Guindon, Coordinator, OCAPI, Kathy Kovacs-Burns, Co-Chair, Best Medicines Coalition (BMC) and Denis Morrice, Co-Chair, BMC

The joint presentation, entitled "Involving Patients", provided a sound basis for understanding OCAPI, its history and mandate and where it fits within Health Canada – part of the Health Products and Food Branch (HPFB) - and why Health Canada and OCAPI were interested in developing a partnership with Best Medicines Coalition. We also learned that the BMC was formed in 2000 as a grass-roots group of consumer and advocate organizations and that today it represents more than 12 million Canadians. We learned what organizations are BMC members, how BMC operates, what are its challenges with the partnership with OCAPI and about its plans to expand partnerships with other Health Canada directorates. We learned how the two organizations worked together on a workshop to look at options for involving patients in the development of HPFB policies. Outcomes to date – extremely valuable input for the development of OCAPI's Patient Involvement Strategy; stronger relationship between the BMC and OCAPI and HPFB than before the workshop and BMC participating in other HPFB public involvement activities. Each partner reportedly understands each other better and has a commitment to continue working together.

You can reach Roger Farley at Roger_Farley@hc-sc.gc.ca; Jacinthe Guindon at Jacinthe_Guindon@hc-sc.gc.ca; Kathy Kovacs-Burns at kathy.kovacsburns@ualberta.ca

Clarity and Comedy, May 20, 10:30 to noon

Presenters: Pat Ruby, Dan Gascon

The subtitle of this session was “Focusing your participatory processes and using humour to lighten the load.” The aim of the session was two-fold – to set out IDEA phases for collaborative decision-making and to demonstrate how to use humour to lighten difficult moments in consultation processes. The session was a “tag team” presentation with presenters taking turns addressing process considerations and constructive comedy.

IDEA is an acronym for stages in decision making: Initiate; Develop evaluation approach and alternatives; Evaluate; Act on the agreement. And the spots/spaces between the phases are good times to go back to participants to see whether anything has been missed and to capture agreement. The IDEA framework can also be plotted against the IAP2 spectrum (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower) to clearly map the process and identify how collaborative it actually is.

Strategic space diagrams were used as a way to “eyeball” how well alternatives meet their objectives and to help distinguish the alternatives people want from the alternatives that are needed (“wanna have” vs “gotta have”).

Public participation folks have known for a long time that time spent at the front end saves time at the other end – and in this session, we learned that “Time spent at the front end saves 34 times the time at the other end”!

Comedy, it was suggested, is made by pointing out the incongruities in life and everyone does it all the time. We learned to distinguish 3 kinds of humour – wit, sarcasm and cynicism - distinguished by purpose, tone, timing and view point of the audience. The easiest ways to bring humour to a situation are: to smile, to listen, to set the tone for laughter and lightness, and to share your own humour. We were also introduced to many kinds of laughter and given the opportunity to try out some of them. Much to participants’ surprise, what started out feeling quite forced quickly turned into genuine laughter.

Pat Ruby can be reached at rubym@telusplanet.net

Dan Gascon can be reached at www.humorforyourhealth.com

Tools for Working with Antagonistic or Coercive Stakeholder Groups, May 20, 1-2:45 p.m.

This session was intended to demonstrate ways to defuse “coercive” groups, those groups who can hijack or deadlock public processes. A group exercise was used to demonstrate the “is-ought” discussion; a series of questions were used to prompt discussion describing the current situation (what “is”) and the ideal situation (what “ought” to be the case) as a way to demonstrate this approach.

Participants agreed that the “is”- “ought” discussion could be useful, provided it did not unduly raise expectations. However, we disagreed about the value of the particular questions that were

provided. The session left us feeling that there is a much larger conversation that needs to take place about antagonistic or coercive groups as well as about ways to minimize opportunities for grandstanding.

The session was delivered by Steve Piet on behalf of Sam Alessi and Harold Heydt, Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratories.

Are You REALLY Ready to *Engage*? – City of Calgary, May 20, 1:00 -2:45 pm

Presenters: Dr. Barbara Samuels, Knowledge@work; Lonny Gabinet, City of Calgary

The focus of this session was on a two-year process that the City of Calgary undertook to develop a comprehensive framework on citizen dialogues. The City has over 300 civic partnerships, and reached the realization that the City required a more structured approach to public engagement so that decision makers could engage more appropriately with citizens. The framework that they developed is grounded in the following list of values: accountability, inclusiveness, transparency, commitment, and responsiveness. If the engagement process is not grounded in these values, dialogue practitioners face an inherent set of risks. The project developed a series of materials including “think and do” sheets and “go/no go” sheets which are designed to help public dialogue practitioners assess the extent of their own readiness to undertake public dialogue. Some of these materials can also be applied to different stages of the planning and implementation of a citizen dialogue (including identification of issues, identification of stakeholders, conduct engagement, monitor and evaluate process and outcomes, etc.). Two of the difficulties that the City recognizes are inherent to public engagement are that: (1) there are questions and tensions as to who has control over the outcomes of the process, and (2) since city councillors are only in office for 3 years, they face a time barrier to effectively engaging with citizens.

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Dr. Barbara Samuels can be reached at Email : barb.samuels@work.org, Tel.: (403)-543-1179

Generation Next: Involving young people in decision-making, May 20, 3:15 – 4:45 p.m.

Presenter: Laura Edwards

Laura Edwards is a member of the democracy team at the British Institute for Public Policy Research. The goal of IPPR is for public policy to be informed by the public, for the public to be engaged and active around shaping public policy.

Her session focused on involving young people (under 24) in policy issues. She challenged our understanding of the reasons young people are not involved, indicating that disenchantment and skepticism are more likely reasons than apathy.

Drawing on recent examples, considerable evidence was provided of young people’s active involvement in policy research as well as in local government structure. Much of the session was devoted to discussing challenges as well as successful approaches to engaging young people.

Laura Edwards can be reached at l.edwards@ippr.org

Citizens' voices and values in public policy making, May 20, 3:15 – 4:45 p.m.

Presenters: Mary Pat MacKinnon, Director, Public Involvement Network, Canadian Policy Research Networks and Sandra Zagon, Senior Researcher and Project Manager, Public Involvement Network, Canadian Policy Research Networks

The objectives of the workshop were two-fold – first to highlight three case studies of deliberative dialogue undertaken in recent years by the Public Involvement Network, with a focus on methodology and results and second, to engage the participants in a simulated dialogue on three questions arising from the presentation, namely:

- ways to adapt the deliberative dialogue methodology
- incorporating citizens' contributions through public involvement into the policy process; and
- the challenges inherent in evaluating public involvement activities.

The three cases were the Quality of Life Indicators Project and Report Card, the Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Health Care in Canada and the Citizens' Dialogue on Canada's Future: A 21st Century Social Contract.

Mary Pat and Sandra's tag team presentation introduced the participants to CPRN and to its Public Involvement Network. They quickly shifted to the dialogue methodology CPRN has refined over eight years of practice, which features partnerships with funders, the establishment of a project Steering Committee, the commissioning of peer-reviewed background research papers and public opinion survey analysis, which serve to inform the preparation of scenarios or options and the dialogue support material, including citizen handbooks and pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires. CPRN has undertaken national dialogues, each with multiple sessions across the country, in English and in French, in urban and rural and remote locations, structured with plenary and small group sessions. The dialogues have been moderated by trained facilitators and note-takers, who lead citizens to look for common ground. Notes, transcripts and videos have been used to capture the raw data of the citizens' dialogues, which provide both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. Citizens are selected either on a purely random basis (health care and social contract dialogues) or through a mix of random and select recruitment (quality of life dialogue). In the dialogues on health care and the social contract, analysis was done of the pre- and post-dialogue questionnaires, the citizens' opening and closing statements, the flip chart notes of working groups and plenary sessions, of the common ground achieved in plenary, of the choices made by citizens and of the video and audio tapes and the transcripts of each session. Reports of the dialogue results are prepared and circulated to citizen participants, policy makers, elected officials, media and other potential interested parties. Before presenting the individual results of each of the case studies, Mary Pat and Sandra shared what CPRN has learned from this public involvement work – that citizens want to be involved in discussions of public policy that matter to them and that they integrate their economic, social and political values in so doing. Citizens and experts and stakeholders all have a role to play in policy research – only citizens can speak to their values. CPRN's dialogue work is having a measurable impact on policy development, with governments giving evidence of listening to what citizens have to say. In spite of this, there remain considerable challenges in the path of increased public involvement, including adequate funding, clear links with the policy process, identification of best practices and lessons learned and systematic evaluation of public involvement activities, both from a process and outcomes perspective.

From the three working groups which were convened in the second part of the session, conference delegates met the challenge citizens have in dialogue – working on difficult or complex questions in little time. As in the case of dialogues, the results were rich, as evidenced from the following highlights from the group reports to plenary towards the close of the session.

How should decision-makers (elected officials and public servants) incorporate citizens' contributions through public involvement into the policy process?

- Elucidate the choices that are available to them and the implications and the values they should employ to make those choices
- Provide a 'decision' or 'solution' space in the values framework – come up with anything from within that space – calls on the creative capacities of citizens

What are the most common and formidable challenges or barriers to evaluation (of public involvement activities) and how would you overcome them?

- Evaluation is not systematically included in the planning stage of public involvement activities. Have the program design as a circle, not linear, and build evaluation into that circle.
- Resources – people, expertise, time and money is in short order.
- Using qualitative data, not quantitative data – qualitative data has little credibility. Turn the qualitative data into quantitative indicators to overcome this challenge. Strike a balance between the quantitative and the qualitative.
- There is no baseline for the long term. Just do it. Just start – is the way to beat this barrier.
- Participants/citizens are tired of being consulted. Doing an evaluation at the end of the consultation adds to that fatigue. Build evaluation into the process, not as an add-on at the end.
- There is criticism if we and if we do not do evaluation. So do it. Do not be afraid of the results. Best practices and lessons learned can be gleaned.

What innovations/adaptations can enhance public involvement methodologies?

- Information-sharing is key and there needs to be a common understanding by participants of what is expected of them.
- Work more with politicians to get their networks and communications vehicles. Use community newspapers rather than national dailies to reach citizens.
- Open houses are resented. Citizens do not want them any more. They want dialogues, to learn from each other, to exchange with each other, to have a fair opportunity to participate.
- Think about using radio talk shows, community showrooms in a pro-active way.
- Use other organizations as leverage.

The session extended beyond the prescribed time for those who wanted to stay to view the ten-minute video CPRN has prepared of citizens in dialogue on the future of Canada. This is available upon request from CPRN.

Mary Pat can be reached at mmackinnon@cprn.org and Sandra can be reached at szagon@cprn.org. You can learn more about the The Public Involvement Network by visiting CPRN's web site at www.cprn.org and clicking on Research Networks.

Plenary Session: Core Values Award Gala Dinner, May 20, 6:00 p.m.

A highlight of each IAP2 conference is the Core Values Gala – a festive dinner accompanied by the presentation of a number of awards to people and organizations who have made outstanding contributions to the field of public participation.

At this year's event:

- Lewis Michaelson, Past President of IAP2, initiated the process of re-evaluating IAP2's Core Values and encouraged all IAP2 members to provide feedback;
- Three awards of distinction were presented, one to Carolyn Lukensmeyer, President of AmericaSpeaks, for her organization's work to make deliberative dialogue public and visible, one to Metro Public Affairs, a regional planning agency for the Portland, Oregon, USA metropolitan area and the third one to the New South Wales, Australia National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The latter two awards were "Special Recognition Awards for Public Participation Innovation within a Government Organization." Margaret Harvey (IAP2 board member) accepted on behalf of Carla Rogers for the NPWS and Karen Withrow accepted for Metro.
- Carolyn Lukensmeyer held diners spellbound as she described the process orchestrated by AmericaSpeaks for "Listening to the City," the "21st Century Town Hall Meeting," which brought more than 4000 New Yorkers together in July 2002 to discuss the future development of Lower Manhattan

Plenary Session: Engaging Stakeholder Networks as a Pathway to Sustainability, May 21, 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.

Ann Svendsen, Executive Director of the Centre for Innovation in Management at Simon Fraser University, was the speaker for the Wednesday morning plenary session. She described in clear and thoughtful terms, the evolution of a corporate-stakeholder engagement process from one-way communication to consultation and partnerships, and more recently, to a self-organizing network form which she calls "whole system engagement."

She noted that we now live in a network-based reality which has to change how we develop public policy. She also addressed the need for a new paradigm in stakeholder relations, one that works to build networks of citizens and influencers to develop collaborative solutions to shared problems, issues or opportunities.

She challenged a number of what she termed "noble certainties" and identified new terms of engagement in which network outreach is the starting point, the journey is about collaborative learning, the prize is innovation, with good relationships built along the way.

Ann Svendsen can be reached at svendsen@sfu.ca

Fostering Diversity in Public Participation Design, May 21, 10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

Presenters: Beth Carlson
Anne Carroll

This session was intended to raise awareness, empathy and skills for fostering diversity through the design of public participation activities. The session objectives were achieved. Based on their presentations, Beth and Anne led the session participants to explore the topic of diversity, in plenary and small group sessions, with the aid of special materials and participatory exercises, which included taped voices to bring the experiences of others realistically and personally in the room. Particularly useful was the exercise and handouts which had participants explore the spectrum of diversity presented by one of three proposed scenarios. Participants had to consider the implications for participation design by responding to questions like: what have I got here? Who's out there as potential participants? What are the implications of what I have? What are the barriers to their participation? What do I need to do to remove those barriers? A practical and useful design and planning framework to integrate diversity into the planning phase of any public involvement activity.

Beth Carlson can be reached at ecarlson@pmlink.com and Anne Carroll, at carrfran@qwest.net

The Establishment of the Public Advisory Committee within the Health Products and Food Branch in Health Canada, May 21, 10:30-11:45 am

Presenters: Roger Farley, Bonnie MacLellan, and Jacinthe Guindon, Health Canada; and Wayne Busch, citizen member of Public Advisory Committee

The presentation began with Health Canada's explicit recognition that Canadians want more health-related information and want to be more involved in the decision-making process at Health Canada. A challenge that Health Canada, and specifically the Health Products and Food Branch, faces is that because the department is working in a regulated environment, the decisions that the department takes are based on scientific evidence. This makes it more difficult to be transparent with the public about its decision-making process which results in a certain lack of public confidence. In response to these challenges, the Office of Consumer and Public Involvement was created in 2000, and in 2002, the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) was created. The mandate of the PAC, composed entirely of citizens, is to provide information and an opportunity for Canadians to become more meaningfully involved in the decision-making process of the Health Products and Food Branch. The PAC will also provide insight into what citizens think about health issues and advise the Deputy Minister.

The focus of the remainder of the presentation was on each of the following stages involved in the development and implementation of the PAC, including the development of the Final Terms of Reference, selection process of members for the PAC, outreach to potential PAC members, and how the PAC meetings function. Each of these stages took place through a careful and extensive process of thinking and research. It was important for example, during the selection process, to ensure that the members selected reflected the diversity of Canada. The outreach to potential candidates was done through national newspapers and through a mail campaign to Health Products and Food Branch partners. Applicants were assessed against a set of measurable

criteria through a process of written submissions and interviews. The project also wanted to ensure that none of the potential candidates were there to represent industry. Two PAC meetings have been held, and a third one is about to be convened. As the PAC goes into its third meeting, the PAC is now moving from learning and absorbing information to providing advice. Wayne Busch, chair of the PAC, commented that the members feel that the selection process was fair and thorough, and that committee members hope that as the PAC matures, they will be able to move into more proactive discussions instead of only responding to the issues as presented by Health Canada.

For more information on the project and on the Public Advisory Committee, contact Roger Farley, Director General, Health Canada, Office of Consumer and Public Involvement, Email : roger_farley@hc-sc.gc.ca, Tel.: (613) 946-6542, Bonnie MacLellan, Coordinator, Public Involvement, Information and Communication, Health Canada, Office of Consumer and Public Involvement, Telephone: (613) 946-1098, Email : bonnie_maclellan@hc-sc.gc.ca , or Jacinthe Guindon, Acting Coordinator, Community Outreach, Health Canada, Telephone: (613) 941-9372, Email: jacinthe_guindon@hc-sc.gc.ca

Entrenching Citizen-Driven Government: A federal perspective, May 21, 10:30 – 11:45 a.m.

The aim of this panel was to discuss citizen-driven government from the perspectives of the civil service, elected officials and citizens. The panel was moderated by Miriam Wyman, Practicum Limited and included Debbie Cook, Privy Council Office, Carolyn Bennett, MP and David Shulman, Democracy Education Network. Wyman and Shulman's research into citizen involvement in Canada had found that even when citizens were active, democracy could be weak.¹ Their research suggests that it is essential to entrench citizen participation to ensure that citizens' voices are considered in policy making and they set out a series of steps that the federal government might take to accomplish this.

These include:

- Entrenching a framework for engagement by establishing performance guidelines, regular reporting and budgeting and auditing engagement
- Setting ground rules for involvement collaboratively
- Making it easier for citizens to engage governments by providing timely access to information, using emerging sources of information for effective engagement, establishing new forums for citizen input, and institutionalizing deliberative processes.

Each panelist addressed their personal interest in the issues, current activities and concerns in their sector and steps needed to build trust between citizens and governments and to ensure that all sectors - the public service, government and citizens – were better able to work together to develop public policy.

¹ See Miriam Wyman, David Shulman and Laurie Ham, Learning to Engage: Experiences with Civic Engagement in Canada, Canada's national report for the Commonwealth Foundation's Civil Society in the New Millennium Project (1998), and Miriam Wyman and David Shulman, From Venting to Inventing, a report supported by the Commonwealth Foundation's Citizens and Governance Programme (2002); both can be found at www.democracyeducation.net.

The session was well attended, with questions focused on ways to bring citizens' voices into the policy process and, in particular, the needs of civil servants for support within government for public involvement.

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Debbie Cook can be reached at dcook@pco-bcp.gc.ca

Carolyn Bennett can be reached at bennecc@parl.gc.ca

David Shulman can be reached at wilshu@aol.com

Beyond Marketing: The Policy Dialogue Approach to Creating Consensus amid Regional Contention, May 22, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Presenter: Melaney Seacat, Public Participation Manager, Pima (County, Arizona) Association of Governments

A superb presentation and session, peppered with excellent factual information and handouts on the deliberative dialogue method adopted in the context of a comprehensive planning effort undertaken to develop a 2030 Regional Transportation Plan in a climate of conflict amongst officials and stakeholders and public mistrust, as suggested by the session title. The association, a coordinating body which functions as a conduit for the federal transfer of funds for transportation, is comprised of elected officials from several regions in the county, who form a regional planning organization.

Elected officials, planners, and citizens were highly dissatisfied with earlier efforts to improve the transportation plan. The purpose of the public involvement program was to create the foundation for defining a long term vision and set of goals for the regional transportation plan of 2030, through a values-based exercise and by attracting a diverse participation, including outreach to under-served populations. Key elements of the opportunity to select a rigorous, inclusive, collaborative process were that the issue was highly controversial and the timing was early in the process of policy making. An aggressive marketing campaign was launched to get the public's attention and with the assistance of experts in marketing and public opinion surveys, sensitive and professional consultants and facilitators, a fulsome program for active community engagement (PACE) was designed and implemented. It was a multi-dimensional process with multiple forums for public input, strategies for public education and for including under-served populations, with a continuous focus on building and sustaining partnerships. The first phase of the multi-year development process is complete. It was a broad-based exercise in getting input from citizens on their values, goals and needs. Participation levels were high, with traditionally underserved communities given a specific voice. An assortment of tools and methodologies were used, including a survey (605 respondents, who are geographically and demographically representative of the region), questionnaires (271 responses) and 87 community roundtables involving 797 participants. The public input results were used to develop common ground themes, force for change analysis and the vision and goals for the transportation system of the future. Among the conclusions drawn from the experience, the most interesting are:

- Unprecedented regional discourse by a highly diverse number of citizens about transportation and quality of life
- Enormous degree of common ground was discovered

- Innovations in use of policy dialogue and in how planners consider public input results in decision making
- Facilitation and conflict resolution tools help

After the presentation, which was of particular interest because of the quality of life angle used to get at transportation, we went through a simulated dialogue roundtable. Throughout the demonstration, Melanie ensured that we knew what facilitation technique was being used and why. And several were used, from an introductory exercise to prime the pump for the issue at hand and to give participants the opportunity to find their voice in the group, to a mapping or storyboarding exercise, through to a structured brainstorming (nominal group technique) session in plenary, with the facilitator capturing citizens' input on flipcharts.

An excellent session from the perspectives of content, process and presenter.

Melaney Seacat can be reached at mseacat@pagnet.org

Taking control of your online public participation process – Technology designed for the public participation practitioner, not the IT department, **May 22, 10:30 – 11:45 a.m.**

Presenters: Marc Rose, Hardy Stevenson Associates
Daniel Rostenne

Marc and his colleague introduced the eConsultation Solutions product, explaining its development, its use and their objective – have a group of public participation conference delegates test it with the view to provide suggestions for improvement.

The software product was developed by a web development company and a company specializing in public participation. It is intended to provide clients with the ability to set up and implement their own e-consultation tools. The creators wanted an effective online consultation software which would provide the same functionality as a traditional consultation process and one that would complement a face-to-face process. That functionality includes:

- Inform and educate
- Notify participants of event
- Host the event
- Collate ideas
- Provide feedback
- Evaluate

The e-consultation solutions software was demonstrated and clearly has been built to provide complementary online components to all these functions. There is great potential with this product as users have the ability to create and manage users and groups and users and groups have the ability to create their own content or set up groups. It is also designed for application by non-technology clients as well as those who are technology oriented.

In the question and answer period following the demonstration, we learned that costing arrangements will depend on either a monthly licensing fee or a lease with the application service

provider. The product is Microsoft-based and has been written in open code. There are other technical features which one would likely want to understand. The best advice I can give is to visit www.econsultationsolutions.com and to get in touch with the product creators. This would be well worth the effort.

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