



Public Dialogue: When, Why and How

Ready, Set, Go Conference

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Introduction

- Governments are prepared to involve the public; need to refine the how, when,
- Need to distinguish the publics; citizens, experts, and stakeholders
- Key challenge is to align the type of involvement with
 - the different public actors
 - the stages of policy making

Type of involvement

- A continuum --- shallow to deep
 - communications, consultations, engagement
- Engagement
 - deliberative process
 - working through of issues
 - searching for common ground
 - mutual listening and public learning
 - values, values-based choices

Who to involve

- Citizens
 - contribute values, priorities, choices
- Experts
 - contribute technical knowledge, not values
- Stakeholder groups
 - contribute technical knowledge; buy-in required

How to involve

- Depends on stage of policy-making
 - Agenda-setting:
 - experts and stakeholders dominate
 - Problem definition:
 - ***engaging*** citizens can help frame the issues, propose options, map the boundaries of where change is possible (e.g. US health care)

. . . How to involve

- Policy development
 - **consult** with stakeholders and experts
 - the domain of the governing party
- Implementation
 - **communicate** the choices, links to input from citizens
 - **consult** stakeholders
- Evaluation
 - **communicate** with citizens, invite their feedback

Engagement is relevant when..

- Genuine role for citizens
- Policy-makers ready to invest in learning and listening
- Big conflicted choices and tradeoffs
- At stages of Problem Definition and setting of Broad Directions
- Value in Public learning ...conditions and opportunities have to be created

Key ingredients of engagement

- For legitimacy, the process must
 - be representative
 - offer assured listening
 - occur in a neutral, safe space
 - be transparent and informative -- before, during and after
 - no pre-determined outcomes

Quality of Life Project

- National Dialogue project
- Purposes were to:
 - create a prototype of indicators
 - bridge differences in language, measure, tools
 - capture what truly matters to Canadians
 - equip us to track change

The Dialogue

- Information/reading material beforehand
- Group dialogues
 - 3 hours; 10 participants
 - range of groups
- Trained moderation/systematic recording
- Priorities identified; Choices made; but..
- Analysis and Interpretation
- Report of results

An intense, inclusive process

- 40 dialogues in 2 weeks, 346 Canadians
- 21 locations in 9 Provinces
- Urban -- Rural
- English -- French
- Youth, hard-to-reach, influencers, random groups.

The results.....

- Canadians value their political, social and environmental commons plus economic stability.
 - Political rights and freedoms
 - Health ...universal and accessible care
 - Education...universal and accessible
 - Environmentquality
 - Social programs ...basic needs are met

Their cross-cutting priorities ..

- Accessibility
- Availability
- Quality
- Personal security/control
- Equity/fairness

Our next steps ...

- A Report Card
- An on-line version of the project
- Experimentation
 - Other versions/variations of Dialogue
 - Other deliberative processes
- Refinement and Improvement



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