



How to Encourage Public Participation

Before you involve the public, ask the following:

- **WHO** is the ultimate decision maker,
- **WHY** you are involving the public,
- **WHAT** do you want the public to do,
- **WHEN** do you want the public to participate, and
- **HOW** will you know the public has participated

Answering these questions will provide clarity for all participants and allow you to manage expectations about the role of community input, how it will be gathered and its impact on decision making.

Getting Started

Have clear answers to the **WHO, WHY, WHAT, WHEN,** and **HOW** questions above and reach out to stakeholders.

Create a measurable definition of project success.

Design a monitoring and evaluation system that will provide data to show if success has been achieved.

Decide on a participation format that will provide the data needed to know if success is being achieved. This doesn't have to be a meeting. Options could include drop-in sessions, focus groups, webinar, moderated public information meeting, survey, charette, information table, interactive map, etc.

Make a list of resources you will need and check with your supervisor to see if you will be able to secure them (markers, sign-in sheet facilitators, video, etc)

Participation at Events

If you are using a physical space and fixed time participation format, choose a time/venue that is stakeholder appropriate.

Address barriers to participation:

- Lack of childcare
- Lack of public transit options
- Lack of Parking
- Inaccessible communications
- English as a second language
- Low language/literacy skills
- Lack of time
- Disinterest
- Mistrust (feeling input doesn't matter)

See "How to Schedule a Public Meeting"

Spread the Word (see "How to Get the Word Out") Be sure to include your answers to the **WHO, WHY, WHAT, WHEN,** and **HOW** questions above.

Create and maintain a welcoming environment.

Manage stakeholder expectations.

Practice active listening.

Take photos and, if appropriate, identify a live Tweeter.

Allow time for evaluation and thank yous at the end of the meeting.

Survey participants to evaluate.

THANK people for participating

Wrapping Up

Remind participants of the project's next steps and how their feedback will be used in decision making.

Tell participants where to find related materials online.

Say THANK YOU to participants and staff who have helped you!

Remember to recognize good work/support from colleagues to senior town leaders. You did not do this alone so be sure to share the credit when things go well.

Share participation and evaluation results with internal and external stakeholders

Post photos and materials online.

Monitor post-participation buzz and news stories.

Continue managing internal and external expectations and actively listening to feedback/concerns.

