Use of Multiple Methods and Internet Technology to Achieve Greater Public Participation

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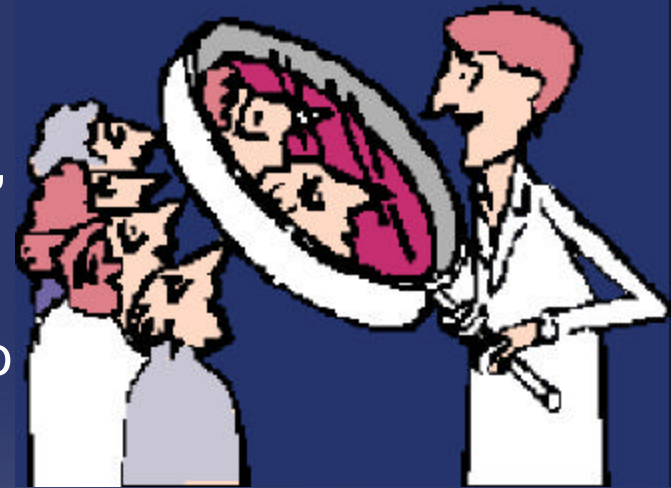*involves people in the decisions that affect them*

Background

- "Traditional" public involvement processes typically rely on only a few public involvement approaches – most frequently open houses, public meetings, information sessions and comment sheets.

- In most processes, only one or two of these approaches are used. These approaches tend to target self-selected audiences and are frequently criticized for representing the views of limited stakeholders and sectors.

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Who Is the Public?

- The public is a constantly shifting multiplicity of affiliations, interests, and alliances.

- There is no single 'public,' instead there are a number of publics who may emerge at any time during the process depending on their particular concerns and the issues involved.

- People participate when they are strongly affected.

- The public changes for each issue, and grows larger as a decision gets closer and consequences are understood.

Lack of Involvement

- In today's society, many stakeholders and the public in general do not have the time, the inclination, nor the priority to attend open houses or public meetings…to participate at all.

- Consequently, traditional approaches miss many sectors of society.

Solutions

- One of the solutions to these dilemma's is to develop multiple methodologies that target a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

- Methodologies that employ current telecommunications and Internet technologies (including web-based, on-line surveys, telephone surveys) can be accessible to the public and stakeholders at their convenience.

A Combined Approach

- When technology-based approaches are combined with the more traditional consultation techniques or other methodologies such as information sessions, focus groups, sector-specific discussion sessions, and expert interviews, a much broader range of stakeholders can be engaged.

- Decision makers feel satisfied that consultation initiatives have targeted not just those with vested interests but also the broader population.

Case Studies Demonstrating a Combined Approach

- Case studies are policy development or policy reviews:
  - Public Health and Safety and Sour Gas Review
  - Kananaskis Recreation Development Policy Review
  - Ghost-Waiparous Access Management Planning Consultation
  - A Delphi Process to Establish Priorities for Science and Technology Funding in Alberta
  - A Delphi Process to Determine Cancer Research Priorities in Canada
  - Restwell Area Redevelopment Plan
  - Banff Housing Study

Case Study:
Public Health and Safety-Sour Gas Review

- *Major Consultation Components:*
- *Phase 1: Issue Identification*
  - Multi-Stakeholder Committee of key stakeholders (25)
  - Website Link: http://www.publicsafetyandsourgas.org/
  - Regionally based newspaper advertisements
  - Facilitated and recorded one-on-one meetings with Committee members and the interested publics in 12 cities and towns
  - On-line public web survey (self selected respondents)
  - Random sample telephone survey of 1200 households

Public Health and Safety-Sour Gas Review

- *Phase 2: Review of Directions Document*
  - Development of draft policy or "Directions Document" and release to the public and stakeholders
  - Online web survey of responses
  - Public meetings in eight communities to review and comment on directions Document
  - Recommendations to the Government of Alberta and the Energy and Utilities Board
- *Phase 3: Implementation*
  - Sub group of the Stakeholder Committee agreed to ongoing role monitoring implementation
  - Public report completed on an annual basis and released to public

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Outcomes of Public Health and Safety-Sour Gas

- Awarded the International Energy Commission's (London, England) Best Outreach and Communications Award - 2002

- Core group at a senior level organized in EUB to deliver the implementation process

- Major new process developed for "critical" sour gas well exploration and development

Case Study: Kananaskis Recreation Development Policy Review

- *Major Public Components:*
  - Two public "issue scoping" sessions
  - Development of a 25 person multi-stakeholder advisory committee
  - Advertising on voice and in print media
  - Development of a web site with all background information
  - Development of a consultation backgrounder and companion workbook (2800 participants)
  - Random sample telephone survey of Albertans (1200)

Outcomes of the Kananaskis Recreation Development Policy Review Consultation

- All recommendations accepted by provincial government and the overall creation and updating of the policy documents to support the results

- Policy in place within three months

- Creation of two new provincial parks within Kananaskis Country

- All further large scale commercial recreation development projects cancelled. A few very small scale projects allowed

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Case Study: Ghost-Waiparous Access Management Planning Consultation

- *Major Public Components:*
- *Stage 1*
  - Website developed with background documents and maps available for downloading. Online Link:http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/regions/southwest/ghost/
  - Backgrounder document as an overview (12 pager) for public review
  - Information Sessions in seven communities
  - Seven "likeminded" Stakeholder meetings facilitated and recorded

Case Study: Ghost-Waiparous Access Management Plan Consultation

- Web questionnaire of public (1250 participants-95% completed on-line)
- Random sample survey of public in region (400)
- Summaries of all results on the website within two weeks

- *Stage 2*
  - Development of a "Directions Document"
  - Newspaper advertising with availability of toll free number for information
  - Online survey with downloadable "Backgrounder and Survey" as PDF files

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Outcomes of Ghost-Waiparous Access Management Plan Consultation

- **Stage 1** had no confrontations or hostilities between participant stakeholders
- General agreement and support for the overall themes and issues
- Significant support from senior civil servants and politicians to the directions being proposed
- **Stage 2** complete…extended process due to several summer events including SARS, Mad Cow, increasing dollar (negatively impacting tourism) - awaiting closing of process
- **Stage 3** to commence in May, 2004 with the development of mapped trail system for different user types plus policy etc.

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Case Study: A Delphi Process to Establish Priorities for Science and Technology Funding

- ***Major Public Components:***
  - Creation of a steering committee to develop key issues
  - Development of a list of potential stakeholders to invite to the process (500)
  - Development of the process including hard copy, fax, mail and web-based input
  - Stage I-Introduction, Backgrounder and Questionnaire (distributed to 500 participants) hard copy, fax or on-line
  - Stage II-Analysis of the results of Round I produced as a Backgrounder and fed back to participants with Round II questionnaire

Case Study: A Delphi Process to Establish Priorities for Science and Technology Funding

- ***Major Public Components:***
- Stage III-Analysis of results of Round II produced as a Backgrounder and questionnaire. Regional meetings held for those participants who could attend the sessions around the province and all others (national and international participants) completed questionnaire and mailed, faxed, emailed or completed on-line

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Case Study: A Delphi Process to Determine Cancer Research Priorities in Canada

A Delphi Process for Setting Cancer Research Priorities in Canada

VOLUME II- APPENDICES

A Delphi Process for Setting Cancer Research Priorities in Canada
Stage 1- Questionnaire
Cutoff Date: October 26, 2001

- ***Major Public Components:***
  - Development of an invitation list of 500 medical researchers, health care professionals, government regulators and "survivor" organizations
  - Contact and invitation to participate on on-line Delphi survey process. Email invitation for Stage I with link and password into their file on the database-Online database.

    Link: http://www.praxis.ca/cancer3/cdcover.htm
  - Analysis of results of Stage I formulated into a backgrounder and questionnaire for Stage II.
  - Invitation by Email again

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Outcomes of A Delphi Process to Establish Priorities for Science and Technology Funding

- Government of Alberta streamlined and focused its funding priorities as a result of the process

- Health, information technology, two of the areas focused on by government

- Development of the Alberta SupraNet followed, which linked all communities (rural and urban) in the province with high speed fibre optic and satellite infrastructure. This is the first jurisdiction in North America to be fully integrated

Case Study: A Delphi Process to Determine Cancer Research Priorities in Canada

- *Major Public Components Continued:*
  - Analysis of results of Stage II formulated into a backgrounder and questionnaire for Stage III. Invitation by Email again
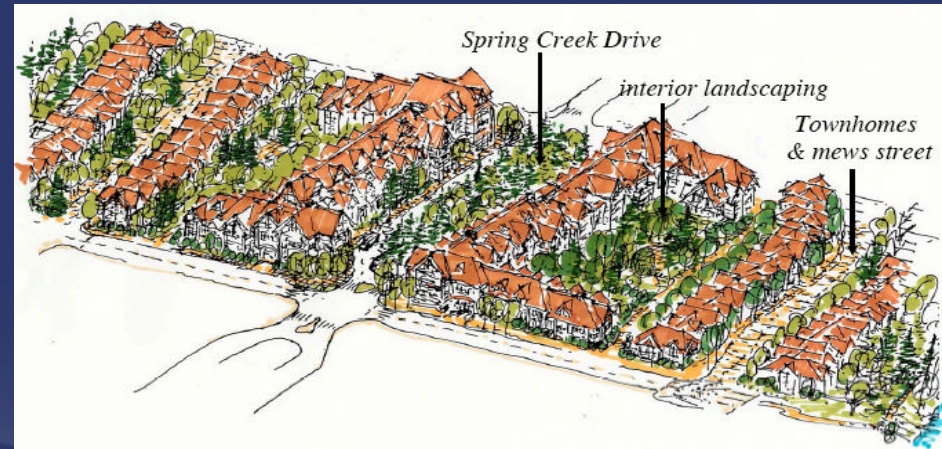 - Final results of Stage II Emailed to all participants from all three stages and final output

Outcomes of A Delphi Process to Determine Cancer Research Priorities in Canada

– Extensive involvement on the part of over 150 participants of the original 500 - notable drop-off rate from first to third stage. If it had been available, a phone follow-up would have been valuable.

– Great value in a staged "learning" process where everyone could see the changes through the three stages

– Good educational tool to show all participants the priorities and issues of medical practitioners across Canada

– Results input into funding cycles for various funding agencies across Canada including Health Canada

Case Study Restwell Area Redevelopment

- Multiple Public Processes:
    - Public Review Meeting on the Terms of Reference
    - Two Household Surveys of Existing Restwell Residents
    - Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee
    - Newsletters to Restwell Residents

Spring Creek Drive
interior landscaping
Townhomes & mews street

    - Concept Design, principles Open House
    - Socio-Economic Impact Analysis (one of first in Canada on major municipal developments)
    - Draft Area Redevelopment Plan Open House
    - Interviews with key municipal, regional and provincial stakeholders
    - Contact with all media groups
    - Final public review of Area Redevelopment Plan

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Case Study Banff Housing Study

- Major Public Components:
  - Presentation of TofR to Town Council
  - Review of Previous Banff Surveys
  - Random Sample Housing Survey
  - Survey of Businesses with Staff Housing Needs
  - Survey of Business Employees
  - Interviews with Key Business and Public Sector Representatives
  - Focus Sessions with Key Groups-Youth and Mature populations
  - Presentation of Results to Council

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Conclusions and Outcomes to Support the Use of Multiple Methods and Internet Technology in PI

- Multiple methods target various stakeholder groups and achieve a higher and more valuable level of participation.
- Multiple methods demonstrate that you do not have to put all your "eggs in one basket"…if a questionnaire fails, or no one comes to a public meeting, you have other techniques to fall back on which you have used in support of the process.
- Multiple methods will reach different groups, and accomplish different objectives.
- Decision-makers feel assured that multiple technologies target the general public, specific sectoral groups, as well as stakeholders who have a vested interest. The researchers and ultimately the decision makers can see what the polarized position and groups are saying as well as what the "average citizen" is saying.

Conclusions and Outcomes to Support the Use of Multiple Methods and Internet Technology in PI

- There is no silent majority…researchers can access the opinions of the "supposed" silent majority through a number of the techniques.

- Internet technology, in concert with a variety of techniques can dramatically increase the level of participation (95% in recent on-line surveys).

- Online surveys and questionnaires allow the public and senior officials to participate within their own timeframe resulting in both quantitatively more respondents, as well as more thoughtful responses.

- In the case of contentious projects, internet technology can assure anonymity and reduce fear of reprisal among participants. Great value in a staged "learning" process where everyone could see the changes through the stages.

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Conclusions and Outcomes to Support the Use of Multiple Methods and Internet Technology in PI

- Ultimately, PLAN…PLAN…PLAN!!!

- Strategize, find out how the stakeholders and the public want to communicate and participate…use those tools and methodologies.

- Mix and match depending on the process…don't assume the process or how people want to be involved or participate.

Building Trust and Commitment

- Ultimately, it is not the approach, the methodology, not Internet technology that will 'win over' the public, it is the sincerity of the people conducting the program. Their commitment, integrity and ethical standards will gain the trust and commitment of the public, far faster than any technique.