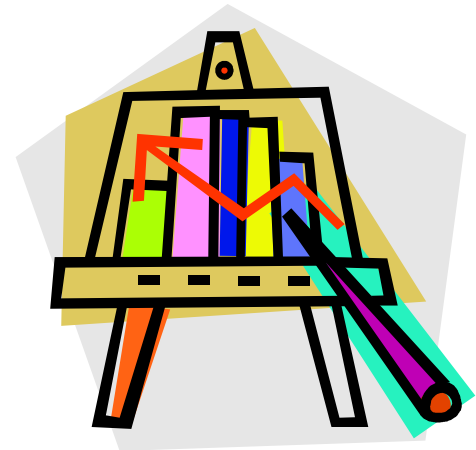# From Communication to Deliberation: A Manager's Guide to Citizen Engagement

Executive Brief

February 2006

Overview

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Key Points

- **Two key shifts affecting how citizens participate in government, world-wide**:
    - Shift from "information exchange" to "information processing" models of engagement
    - Shift from citizens as "consumers" to active "shapers" of government policies and programs

- **These shifts are in response to a publicly-perceived need to both improve the quality and the legitimacy of government actions.**

- **Public managers have a spectrum of options for involving the public**:
    - Traditional one-way communication and consultation
    - Active engagement involving citizens in problem-solving and
    - Active collaboration to build capacity for lasting cooperation through implementation phase of initiatives

- **Techniques and tools have been developed to span this spectrum.** This report describes both face-to-face and on-line tools that managers can use.

- **To expand the use of these approaches may require both regulatory and statutory changes.** These are described in the recommendations section.

What Is Citizen Engagement?

- **"Citizen engagement" refers to forums that bring together affected citizens** into partnership with decision-makers through a dialog-based process at different points in the policy-development continuum: agency setting, policy design, and implementation

- **Goals include:**
  - Inform and educate the public
  - Improve government decision-making
  - Create opportunities for citizens to shape policy
  - Legitimize government decisions
  - Involve citizens in monitoring outcomes
  - Restore trust and engagement of citizens

"Citizen engagement is part of a family of democratic reform ideas that include public participation, public involvement, participatory democracy, deliberative democracy, and collaborative governance."

Spectrum of Citizen Engagement

	Inform	Consult	Engage	Collaborate	Empower
Goal:	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and or decisions	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution	Place final decision-making authority in the hands of citizens

SOURCE: Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation

Deliberative Democracy: Face-to-Face

- **Common Features**
  - Use balanced or neutral background materials
  - Structured around small group dialogue
  - Emphasis is on learning through exploration of competing perspectives
  - Newly developed knowledge informs individual and group recommendations
  - Findings are made available to decision-makers and community members

- **Examples**
  - Land use planning for San Diego's new airport via ChoiceWork Dialogues
  - City spending prioritization via Citizen Summits in District of Columbia's government
  - Environment and natural resource management via Citizen Jury on Climate Change
  - Science and technology via citizen's forum on genetically-modified foods

Deliberative Democracy: On-Line

- **Common features**
  - Ability to participate not constrained by time, place
  - Conversation is asynchronous and often driven by relatively few participants
  - Others can observe in large numbers
  - Often takes place over a period of weeks, not days

- **Examples**
  - California's master plan for education via a variation of a threaded discussion
  - Redevelopment of the World Trade Center site via "Listening to the City" on-line pools of 26 facilitated discussion groups of 25 participants each
  - Contribution and feedback of proposed plans for Flight 93 memorial project

Recommendations

- **For agency leaders**
  - Create a "champion" for citizen engagement
  - Review existing policies to determine barriers, opportunities
  - Include participation as an element in large-scale projects, and fund such efforts
  - Promote experimentation
  - Measure benefits beyond costs (such as reduced litigation)

- **For government-wide policy-makers**
  - Create an interagency task force to develop guidelines, identify barriers
  - Adapt administrative processes, timelines to create opportunities for input
  - Create communities of practice to exchange learning
  - Develop assessment frameworks to evaluate outcomes

Resources and Contact Info

- For copies of the report, visit the IBM Center for The Business of Government Website:
  - www.businessofgovernment.org

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