

Tools for stakeholder engagement and consultation

Source: UNECE and REC (2011)

These following approaches are described below:

- Printed material inviting comments
- Displays and Exhibits
- Information hotline/ Staffed telephone lines
- Internet/Web-based consultations
- Questionnaires and Response Sheets
- Surveys
- Public Hearings
- Workshops
- Advisory Committee

Public participation method	Enables ...			Key features		
	Provision of information	Gathering of comments	Collaborative problem solving	Usual cost of application	Problem-solving ability	Ease of commenting
Range of printed material inviting comments	✓	✓		\$		☹
Displays and Exhibits	✓	✓		\$		☹
Staffed displays and exhibits	✓	✓	✓	\$\$	○	😊
Information hotline	✓	✓		\$		😊
Internet/web-based consultations	✓	✓	✓	\$	○	☹
Questionnaires and response sheets		✓		\$\$		😊
Surveys		✓		\$\$		😊
Public hearings	✓	✓		\$		☹
Workshops	✓	✓	✓	\$	○○	😊
Advisory committee	✓	✓	✓	\$	○○	😊

Key:		
Enables	✓	Yes
Usual cost of application	\$	Lower
	\$\$	Higher
Problem-solving ability	○	Low
	○○	High
Ease of commenting	☹	Moderate
	😊	High

Table A1. Data on SEA Protocol Application

Source: UNECE and REC (2011)

Method: Printed material inviting comments	
<i>Description</i>	- Printed materials are the easiest ways to publicize and provide information on a draft plan or program and the SEA, or to publicize a participation process. Popular forms of the printed materials include: fact sheets, flyers, newsletters, brochures, issues papers, reports, and surveys, etc. These can be single purpose or produced as a series (e.g., newsletters). Printed material can be handed out, made available to be picked up, or mailed out either directly to a select mailing list, or included as 'bill stuffers' with regular mail outs such as utility bills, rates notice, or other regularly posted bills. - Printed materials aim to provide easily read information in words and drawings, to inform a wide range of stakeholders about the plan- or program-making and assessment processes or documents. - Printed material, whether handed out, dropped into letterboxes, distributed by mail, or mailed out with other material, is one of the easiest and most familiar methods for increasing awareness of an issue and soliciting responses to an issue or proposal. - Available budget, and the use of other publicity methods and tools will determine just what type of printed material will best suit your need.
<i>Advantages</i>	- Printed materials can reach a large number of people through mailing or via free display. - Information material with comment sheets or questionnaires facilitates feedback. - Can facilitate the public participation process. - Printed information can be a low-cost publicity means that is easily handed out and carried away. - Can be economically distributed by doubling up with existing mailing lists. - Can reach a wide audience or be targeted towards particular groups.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	- The problem with most printed materials is the limited space available to communicate complicated concepts. - Needs time to design, prepare text, visuals, proofread, print, and fold. - There is no guarantee that the materials will be read – may be treated as junk mail. - If mailed, the guarantee of being read is only as good as the mailing list itself; mailing lists need regular updating. - Appearance of the material should be visually interesting but should avoid a 'sales' look. - Can be lost if included with many other flyers and bill stuffers (consider using colored paper and bold headlines if mailing as a bill stuffer, to ensure this is not just binned without reading). - Can exclude those who are not print literate unless visual elements are used. - Information may not be readily understood and may be misinterpreted.
<i>Examples of sources of information</i>	International Association for Public Participation (2000) IAP2 Public Participation Toolbox, available at http://www.iap2/practitionertools/index.html/

Method: Displays and Exhibits	
<i>Description</i>	These tools are events that are intended to provide project information and raise awareness about particular issues. Displays can be interactive, and can be used as part of a forum, workshop, exhibition, conference, or other event. Displays and exhibits can include feedback opportunities such as blank sheets with one-line questions, and can include drawings, models, maps, posters, or other visual and audio representations illustrating an event, proposal, or issue. Interactive displays can include 'post-it' idea boards, maps and flipcharts or blank posters for comments and questions. Displays and exhibits develop more concrete concepts of proposals or developments, and, where they offer options for interaction, gather public opinions and feedback that can be incorporated into the plan- or program-making and assessment processes. Key issues to consider before, and the main steps to prepare for and carry out the methods, include: • Select a date and venue that will encourage the greatest number of participants to attend (generally weekends or public holidays/shopping centers/public spaces). • Arrange for a number of displays/exhibits to give details of the event/issue. • Place the display/exhibit in a well-populated public space where those most affected by the issue/event are likely to pass by. • Advertise and publicize the event with emphasis on the issue to be considered. • Advertise times when display/exhibit will be open. • Allow adequate time for setting up. • Provide adequate staffing and consider the employment of volunteers, security, and insurance issues. • Provide coordinators to facilitate participation and answer questions. • Collate feedback and publish results.
<i>Advantages</i>	• The tool focuses public attention on an issue. • It can create interest from media and lead to increased coverage of the issue. • Allows for different levels of information sharing. • Provides a snapshot of opinions and community issues based on feedback. • People can view the displays at a convenient time and at their leisure. • Graphic representations, if used, can help people visualize proposals.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	• The tool needs a facilitator to encourage involvement and written feedback. • Information may not be fully understood or misinterpreted if no staff provided to respond to questions or receive comments. • Public must be motivated to attend. • Can damage the proposals reputation if done unprofessionally.
<i>Examples of practical application or key sources of further information</i>	The Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone, Estuary and Waterway Management (Australia) http://www.coastal.crc.org.au/toolbox/alpha-list.asp International Association for Public Participation (2000) <i>IAP2 Public Participation Toolbox</i>. http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/toolbox.pdf US Dept of Transportation (1997) <i>Public Involvement and Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Transportation Fair</i>. Washington, (accessed 12/12/02) http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/tranfair.htm Wates, N. (1999) <i>The Community Planning Handbook</i>. London, Earthscan.

Method: Information hotline/staffed telephone lines	
<i>Description</i>	An Information Hotline offers pre-recorded information on the planning document or an issue via the telephone and/or access to SEA and planning team members who can answer questions or provide additional information and assistance. It aims to deliver accurate, consistent information over the telephone to those who wish to know about an issue or who can provide additional information. Staffed telephone lines can serve as a link between the public and the developer during the duration of the plan or program making and assessment, making the public feel involved. Key steps in application: • Determine the information to be recorded and timetable of updates. • Advertise the phone number, e.g., via stationery and flyers printed, or a sticker e.g., on outgoing printed correspondence or promotional material. • Advertise the number in the media, and ensure it is on all your outreach material. • Set up a hotline number for callers by recording message and hooking up to the phone line. Record information that will answer the most commonly asked questions. • If staffed phone line is used, assign the person to answer the calls. The person assigned to provide information has to be briefed and trained, and has to have a pleasant telephone manner, even with difficult callers. • Set up a toll-free number for non-local callers. • In case of pre-recorded Information Hotline, offer the option of being put through to a specific person for more details. • Record calls/common complaints/concerns in telephone journal for your records and input to the participation/consultation process.
<i>Advantages</i>	• An Information Hotline offers an inexpensive and simple device that can ensure fast, easy, and efficient information dissemination. • Provides a one-stop service to the public to access information about the planning activity. Can describe ways the public can get information and provide feedback. • Offers a reasonably low-cost for set up and updates. • Portrays an image of “accessibility” for an organization, developer, or the SEA team. • A convenient way of receiving comments from interested parties. Not intimidating, easy for people to participate and provide comments. Promotes a feeling of accessibility.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	• Must be adequately advertised to be successful. • If staffed, can be time consuming and limit staff member to perform other tasks. • Designated contact must have sufficient knowledge of the activity to be able to answer questions quickly, accurately, and professionally.
<i>Examples of practical application or key sources of further information</i>	Department of Public Health (Flinders University) and South Australian Community Health Research Unit. (2000) <i>Improving Health Services through Consumer Participation - A Resource Guide for Organisations</i>. Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. Canberra. Available at http://www.participateinhealth.org.au/how/practical_tools.htm. RCRA. 1996. <i>Public Participation Manual</i>. Ch 5: Public participation activities. http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/permit/pubpart/chp_5.pdf. US EPA (2002) <i>National Pollution Elimination System (NPDES) Public Involvement/Participation Hotlines</i>. (Accessed 11/12/02) http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/invol_3.cfm

Method: Internet/Web-based consultations	
<i>Description</i>	The tool typically comprises a website on the Internet. It is used to provide information or invite feedback. Care should be taken to keep the information up to date. More interactive forms of participation on the Internet may also be developed, e.g., online forums and discussion groups. Technically, the potential tools for Internet-based consultations can be: • HTML web pages with links to documents, pictures, and graphics (moving or still) and sound. • Dedicated email address to which non-structured submissions can be sent. • Survey forms that elicit community response on particular issues (HTML or PDF to be faxed/mailed back). • Moderated bulletin boards that allow “threaded” discussions about a range of issues. • Virtual meetings using a chat room facility on specific topics. • Web-casting (i.e., audio, and visual broadcasting via the web) of meetings and events. The Internet can enhance traditional techniques but it cannot replace them. The purpose of the website should be clearly articulated and information should be accurate and timely. The resource implications of maintaining the site need to be carefully assessed and budgeted for before it is established. It should be decided whether the management of the website will be done in-house or outsourced, what web-based tools to be used, and what staff training is needed.
<i>Advantages</i>	• The most straightforward and inexpensive, resource-efficient technique to present and distribute information to those that have Internet access. • The audience is potentially global. • Costs are reduced as no printing or postage costs are incurred. • Has a possibility to provide timely and accurate information about and a historical record of the planning, assessment, and consultation processes. • It is a way to invite stakeholders to comment on the specific proposals and a means of receiving feedback. • An interactive medium allowing discussion and debate.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	• There are significant resource implications in setting up a new website. • The responses can be difficult to analyze if questions are open-ended. • Because not all stakeholders will have access to the Internet, it cannot be used to replace the traditional means of consultation – alternative means of information dissemination will also be required.
<i>Examples of practical application or key sources of further information</i>	iPlan initiative in New South Wales (Australia), http://www.iplan.nsw.gov.au/engagement/techniques/website.jsp

Method: Questionnaires and Response Sheets	
<i>Description</i>	Questionnaires are a basic tool used to collect information and are usually developed and tested to ensure that they are easily understood. Questionnaires ensure that exactly the same questions are presented to each person surveyed, and this helps with the reliability of the results. Questionnaires can be delivered via face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, self-completed forms, mailouts, or online. Questionnaires can be distributed by email as well as posted or faxed. Response sheets can be collected at a workshop or can be picked up at a workshop and mailed back. These can also be mailed out in ways that reduce postage costs when they are included in routine mail-outs, such as the distribution of fact sheets or accounts. • Questionnaire preparation steps: • Draft questions. Keep as short as possible. • Test questions with a small pilot group to determine whether they are unbiased, straightforward, and not open to misinterpretation. The wording of questions has to be clear to avoid bias. • Indicate the purpose of the questionnaire at the outset. • Include qualitative data such as age, sex, address, education, etc. to allow for further extrapolation of the results and/or inclusion into the mailing list. • Send out questionnaires. If mailed and if the budget allows, provide free mail reply (stamped addressed envelope; freepost mailbox, etc.) to improve responses. • Document and publicize the responses.
<i>Advantages</i>	• Less personal if interviews or telephone surveys are not used, but anonymity can encourage more honest answers. • Useful to generate both qualitative and quantitative data. • Works well to reach respondents who live in a large area. • Provides information from those unlikely to attend meetings and workshops. • Permits expansion of the mail list. • Can be used for statistical validation. • Allows results to be extrapolated by subgroups. • Allows the respondent to fill out at a convenient time. • More economical and less labor intensive than interviews and telephone surveys as they provide larger samples for lower total costs.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	• Low response rates can bias the results. • Needs a return envelope/freepost address to encourage participation. • Depends on a high degree of literacy.
<i>Examples of practical application or key sources of further information</i>	US Department of transport (2002) <i>Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making</i> (accessed 13/12/02) http://ntl.bts.gov/DOCS/pubinvol.html

Method: Surveys	
Description	Surveys are a method used to collect information from a specific population. They can be used to collect broad general information from or about a large audience or specific information from target groups. Surveys can seek information that can be quantitative (facts and figures) and/or qualitative (opinions and values). Surveys use questionnaires to collect information, and these can be delivered through face-to-face interviews, self-completed written forms, telephone surveys, or electronic surveys (see also Questionnaires and Response Sheets). For a well-conducted survey using a large, random sample, surveys are usually high cost. Small-scale surveys using opportunistic sampling and volunteers can be relatively low-cost but may not produce results that can be generalized beyond a specific group of people. Surveys are designed to collect information in relation to a particular issue or planning document. The results of the surveys provide information about the demographics and/or opinions of a specific group of people. Relevant steps in designing and carrying out a survey: 1. Find out what is already known and what relevant surveys are being done or planned elsewhere in order to avoid duplication, and define the scope of the survey. 2. Talk to the developer and relevant authorities to focus the questions. 3. Determine the way the information will be obtained (see Questionnaires and Response Sheets). 4. Select your target audience. How will you sample them? How will you ensure that your survey gives a representation of the ideas of the group? 5. Pilot test the survey to ensure the readability and clarity of questions. 6. Carry out the survey. 7. Collate and analyze the results; prepare a report. 8. Make the report available to those surveyed, to appropriate authorities, and to the media.
	Advantages • Provides traceable data. • Surveys can serve an awareness-raising purpose. • When properly constructed, it can reach a broad, representative public or targeted group. • Can derive varied information from the results.
	Disadvantages • Poorly constructed surveys produce poor results. • Can be expensive if surveying a large audience. • Care must be taken that the wording of questions is unambiguous to prevent skewed results. • Care is needed in sampling to make sure representative samples are taken. • Surveys with tick boxes are the fastest and easiest to process; however, this limits the detail in the information collected.
	Examples of practical application or key sources of further information COSLA. (1998). <i>Focusing on Citizens: A Guide to Approaches and Methods</i>. Available at: http://www.communityplanning.org.uk/documents/Engagingcommunitiesmethods.pdf RCRA. (1996). <i>Public Participation Manual</i>. Ch 5: Public participation activities. http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/permit/pubpart/chp_5.pdf US Department of Transportation (1996) <i>Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making</i> (13/12/02) http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/surveys.htm

Method: Public Hearings	
<i>Description</i>	Public hearings are a formal way of presenting and exchanging information and views on a proposal. Formal public hearings generally tend to be best used in conjunction with more informal methods of engagement, such as informal meetings and facilitation. http://www.iplan.nsw.gov.au/engagement/techniques/publichearing.jsp - top#top Important points to consider before organizing the event: • Clearly describe the purpose of the public meeting and the issue to be considered. • Describe where in the spectrum the public hearing sits. Be particularly clear about the extent to which input provided could influence the outcome of the process. • Decide whether a public hearing is appropriate when you receive a request for one. • Advertise the public hearing by public notice. • Send the notice to each person who requested a public hearing. • Carefully schedule presentations by interested parties and ensure presenters can speak for their allotted time without interruption. • Prepare a report or record of the public hearing and make it public.
<i>Advantages</i>	• During such events, the public is allowed, by prior arrangement, to speak without rebuttal. • Available evidence can be worked through systematically. • Comments received are recorded and made public. • If the event is run well, it can provide a useful way of meeting other stakeholders. • Demonstrates that the responsible authority is open to all interested parties for consultations and information exchange. During such events, the public is allowed, by prior arrangement, to speak without rebuttal. • Available evidence can be worked through systematically. • Comments received are recorded and made public. • If the event is run well, it can provide a useful way of meeting other stakeholders. • Demonstrates that the responsible authority is open to all interested parties for consultations and information exchange.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	• It does not foster dialogue. • An adversarial mood can be created. • Public meetings can be intimidating and may be hijacked by interest groups or vocal individuals. • Minority groups and those who do not like to speak in public are not easily included. • While appearing simple, it can be one of the most complex and unpredictable methods. • May result in no consultation only information provision.
<i>Examples of practical application or key sources of further information</i>	

Method: Workshops	
<i>Description</i>	A workshop is a structured forum where participants are invited to work together in a group (or groups) on an assessment of an issue or an SEA step. The goals of a workshop are to bring participants together in a structured environment (that is, through large and small group activities, discussions, and reflection) to resolve issues and build consensus on the assessment, rather than provide information and answer questions. Alternatively, workshops can be organized to target representatives from a particular stakeholder group, e.g., NGOs, or experts of one area. Workshops require a facilitator who is able to engage all participants in the discussion; therefore, they are participatory tools that are best used with smaller numbers of participants. A variety of tools can be used within a workshop. These include many of the tools listed in this toolbox (see the CRC reference below), e.g., focus groups and/or visioning. A report has to be prepared as on the outcome of the workshop, recording opinions, suggestions, or conclusions that have been collaboratively developed and agreed to by all participants on an issue or proposal.
<i>Advantages</i>	• Excellent for discussion on criteria or analysis of alternatives. • Fosters small group or one-on-one communication. • Offers a choice of team members to answer difficult questions. • Builds ownership and credibility for the outcomes. • Maximizes feedback obtained from participants. • Ability to draw on other team members to answer difficult questions. • Maximized feedback obtained from participants. • Fosters public ownership in solving the problem (see IAP2 reference below). • Can provide a more open exchange of ideas and facilitate mutual understanding. • Useful for dealing with complex, technical issues and allowing more in-depth consideration. • Can be targeted at particular stakeholder groups.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	• Hostile participants may resist what they may perceive as the “divide and conquer” strategy of breaking into small groups. • Facilitators need to know how they will use the public input before they begin the workshop. • Several small group facilitators are usually needed (IAP2). • To be most effective, only a small number of individuals can participate; therefore, a full range of interests is not represented.
<i>Examples of practical application or key sources of further information</i>	Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone, Estuary and Waterway Management (the Coastal CRC) http://www.coastal.crc.org.au/toolbox/alpha-list.asp (Australia) IAP2 – The International Association for Public Participation: http://www.iap2.org/ Ontario Public Consultation Guide 1994, www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/gp/H5.pdf (Canada)

Method: Advisory Committee	
<i>Description</i>	Advisory committees generally comprise expert groups and governmental or non-governmental institutions with expertise in a specific field or interest in the draft plan or program. In a consultation process, they can offer advice on appropriate changes to a plan or program or recommend the introduction of specific measures. Although similar to task forces, advisory committees function as an ongoing structure, while task forces tend to be formed on a short-term basis to focus specifically on the development of a particular proposal. Advisory committees are particularly useful for involving community representatives, especially those with the necessary expertise, in complex, controversial, or significant plan- or program-making and assessment processes. Committees are not lobby groups; they have an important public function beyond individual members' own interests. Committees are more effective if their roles and tasks are clearly established before deciding on membership. Additionally, selection criteria for membership should be established. Time and resources must be committed to supporting the committee throughout the life of the project or the committee. The committee must be informed of progress, consultation results, developer and decision-maker conclusions, as well as any policy changes or emerging issues that will influence the committee's advice or role.
<i>Advantages</i>	• Advisory committees offer additional advice and guidance. • They can help to reduce criticism from interest groups. • They demonstrate a commitment to participatory engagement and suggest to the stakeholders that they will be able to influence decisions and outcomes within certain boundaries.
<i>Disadvantages</i>	• Manage conflicts of interest that may occur during the life of the committee. • May be time- and resource-consuming. Care needs to be taken to establish, manage, and monitor their ongoing operation. • Where there are divergent views or where members have unequal status, knowledge, or expertise, facilitation may be needed.
<i>Examples of practical application or key sources of further information</i>	Steering group for SEA of Scottish Marine Renewables (see http://www.seaenergyscotland.co.uk)