Process planning session

(This tool originally is called: 'Process planning session for the Shape Up promoting group - SUPG')

Process planning allows people to work together to determine the most suitable public participation process for their particular situation. It is particularly useful to hold sessions at an early stage in any community planning initiative and then, again, at periodic intervals.

As many as possible of the key interested parties or stakeholders (members of the promoting group, in the first instance) are invited to ensure that the outcome is supported by all parties.

Participants are introduced to the various options available and helped to design a process of their own, usually by the facilitator.

A formal workshop format is normally followed to make the procedure equitable and transparent.

Sessions are held periodically whenever there is a need to review the overall process.

Make people feel comfortable and relaxed. Spanning lunch can work well for officials and business people with participants seated around circular tables. Evening sessions spanning a buffet supper will normally work better for residents.

Be on guard for sabotage by those who do not want any kind of process to take place.

Showing slides or videos of methods in use and giving concrete examples of good practice is usually a good way to generate enthusiasm.

Sample format

1. Introduction
Facilitator explains event objectives and structure. Those present briefly state who they are and what their hopes are for the session (15 min).

2. Presentation
Slide show or video (good practice cases, etc.) of possible processes to *provide inspiration* (45 min maximum).

3. Aims
Short debate on overall objectives and specific constraints (15 min).

4. Refreshment break

5. Individual ideas
People fill in a *process planner* or develop their ideas on a blank sheet of paper (10 min. minimum).

Sample process planner

Aims
1. What do you want to achieve?
2. What are the main issues?
3. What geographical area are you concerned with? (When and where relevant).

Process
4. What methods do you favour?
5. When should activities take place?
6. Who are the key people to involve?
7. What expertise do you need?

Organisation
8. Which organisation/s should lead?
9. Who else should help?
10. How much will it cost and who pays?
11. Who does what next?
12. Other thoughts and ideas.

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6. Group ideas
People are divided into groups (ideally 4-8). Individuals present their idea to the group. The group votes to pursue one idea only and develop it further (20 min. minimum).

7. Report back
Each group makes semi-formal presentation of its idea to a plenary session of all the participants (5 min. each group).

8. Selection
Vote on which idea to pursue and then discuss improvements and next steps (10 min. minimum).

Ideal numbers: 16-20, larger numbers no problem
Running time: 2-4 hours. 3 hours most comfortable

Note: *this format can also be used for general training purposes with no specific location or issue in mind.*