

MANAGEMENT  
PRACTICES  
No.19



# PUBLIC CONSULTATION GUIDE

CHANGING THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CANADIANS

*Peter Sterne*  
*with Sandra Zagon*



CANADIAN CENTRE  
FOR MANAGEMENT  
DEVELOPMENT

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GESTION

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BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CANADIANS**

*Peter Sterne  
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**Canadian Centre for  
Management Development**  
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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	iii
<i>Foreword</i> .....	v
<i>How to Use This Guide</i> .....	vii
<b>Chapter 1 — Public Consultation: Changing the Relationship between Government and Canadians</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 2 — Understanding Public Consultation</b> .....	5
What Is It? .....	5
Principles for Consultation .....	12
Some Measures for Success .....	15
<b>Chapter 3 — Frameworks for Thinking About Public Consultation</b> .....	17
A Conceptual Framework: The 4-P Pyramid Model .....	18
A Strategic Framework: The Topographical Model .....	21
A Planning Framework: The Rubick's Cube Model .....	22
A Process Framework: The Roadmap Model .....	23
<b>Chapter 4 — A Process Framework: The Roadmap Model</b> .....	25
Phase 1: Before Consultation .....	25
Phase 2: During Consultation .....	54
Phase 3: After Consultation .....	61
<i>Afterword</i> .....	67
<b>Appendix A — Activities</b> .....	69
<b>Appendix B — Checklist</b> .....	85
<i>Bibliography</i> .....	89
<i>List of Figures</i> .....	91





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# Acknowledgements

**T**HIS GUIDE HAS BEEN A WORK in evolution over the past few years. Its preparation is in response to numerous inquiries from public officials for information on developing and implementing public consultation programs.

Many individuals and organizations contributed to the development of this guide:

- individuals from various government departments and agencies who shared their experiences and thoughts with me;
- participants in various CCMD-sponsored programs on managing public consultation, whose views helped to form the information base from which conclusions were reached and models developed;
- individuals from organizations like the Public Policy Forum and the International Association for Public Participation, whose interest in this area helped to shape many of the thoughts reflected in this guide; and
- the people who took the time to read this document in its many drafts and provide thoughtful and practical guidance.

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*Peter Sterne*  
*Canadian Centre for Management Development*



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# Foreword

**T**HE FOCUS OF THIS GUIDE IS public consultation, one of several tools available to bring government and Canadians together to develop and implement sound public policy. At all levels of government, the demand and requirement for meaningful public input into public policy development, implementation and decision making continue to grow. Notwithstanding considerable public consultation activity by the federal government in recent times, a 1994 survey of some 2,400 Canadians suggested that government must place more emphasis on consulting citizens and on consulting them more effectively (Ekos Research, 1995).

In its role as a learning centre for executives in the federal public service, and in keeping with its mission of “encouraging the continuous growth and learning of public managers to capably serve the needs of Canada and Canadians,” the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) is publishing this guide to help foster a more cooperative and consultative culture in Canada’s public sector.

This guide should appeal to many readers, including decision makers, users and practitioners, and students. It is offered primarily to public service managers to help them meet the challenges of effective public consultation. Based on the experiences and expertise of numerous senior managers, the guide supports further learning about effective public consultation — what it is, why it is important, and how to plan, conduct and evaluate public consultation.

The guide contains a good deal of excellent material and experience culled from others. It is not an academic treatise; it is meant to be practical. The approach to content was inclusive, rather than exclusive. Readers will be able to select what they want to focus on, according to their needs. Some readers may use it from beginning to end in a public consultation process. Others may refer to it at various stages of consultation initiatives.

The guide was developed in a consultative, collaborative and iterative manner, drawing on the material, experience and thinking of practitioners from other departments,



governments and sectors. This process continues, and readers are invited to be part of it. Suggestions, comments and experiences are welcome. Contact information can be found in the Afterword.

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# How to Use This Guide

**T**HIS GUIDE IS A PRACTICAL AID to assist public service managers considering or undertaking consultation initiatives. Read from cover to cover, it will provide an understanding of the nature and process of public consultation; used as a reference manual, it reviews the various techniques and processes; used as a roadmap, it will enable the reader to explore everything from first considerations about whether and when to consult through to how to evaluate the quality of that consultation. The guide is divided into four chapters, two appendices and a bibliography.

**Chapter 1** discusses the changing relationship between Canadians and their governments and situates public consultation as one of several tools that have emerged to serve the changing relationship.

**Chapter 2** provides a discussion of what public consultation means for governments in the present Canadian context. It sets out principles and guidelines for effective consultation. How will managers know if they have carried out public consultation well? Some measures of success are presented.

**Chapter 3** offers four different ways to approach the what, where, when, who and how of public consultation. Each framework and model serves a different purpose or approaches public consultation from a unique angle — concept, planning, strategy, and process (including logistics). Taken together they provide an understanding of the rationale for public consultation, rooting methodology in philosophy, actions in objectives.

**Chapter 4** develops one of the four approaches — the process model — in detail, with an annotated checklist of phases and activities, in keeping with the practical orientation of the guide.

Appendix A is an inventory of activities, techniques and mechanisms that can be used in specific consultation initiatives.

Appendix B contains a checklist of steps in carrying out public consultation effectively. The checklist is based on the process framework and roadmap model described in Chapter 4.

A **bibliography** is included at the end of the document for public consultation practitioners interested in expanding their knowledge.

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# Chapter 1

## Public Consultation: Changing the Relationship between Government and Canadians

**L**IFE IN CANADA TODAY IS CHARACTERIZED by complex and rapid change, fuelled in part by the following factors and their impact on governance:

- the information society, the electronic highway, the Internet
- downsizing, restructuring and reengineering
- new thinking about the role, size, structure and authority of government
- public expectations
- the global trade environment
- multiculturalism

- diversity
- values
- constitutional and human rights.

Not so long ago, governments managed public affairs with little direct input or even involvement of citizens, and they did so with public concurrence. Those days are gone. Not only are the problems now facing society beyond the capacity of governments alone to resolve, but people want to be involved in dealing with these issues. Consider for example the challenges of reducing the public debt and deficit, providing adequate health care, educating students and re-educating workers for the twenty-first Century, cleaning up and protecting the

environment, and reducing unemployment.

Today, dealing with these issues requires a more integrated and holistic approach than in the past; tackling these challenges demands the concerted efforts of governments and those outside government. These issues represent opportunities for cooperation and collaboration between and among government departments, various levels of government and the private sector. In fact, it may be that cooperation and collaboration are no longer questions of opportunity; they are essential means of conducting the nation's business effectively.

It is in this context that the relationship between governments and Canadians is changing. Public consultation has evolved as one of several tools enabling governments to share the challenge of developing and implementing sound public policies. Effective public consultation can accomplish a number of things, including these:

- promoting mutual trust, understanding, and cooperation
- clarifying views and acknowledging strong feelings
- educating, fostering knowledge

transfer, creating common information bases

- developing better solutions, better decisions, better governance
- promoting preventative approaches
- increasing awareness of public policy costs and the probability of acceptance
- enhancing the chances of success for government initiatives
- using ideas from other segments of society to gauge changes and emerging issues that will have an impact on government policies and programs
- identifying where new efforts are needed to tackle the challenges of governance.

Better public policy requires better public participation processes. Involving stakeholders at the beginning of policy development helps to distribute and promote ownership and commitment. This is essential, considering resource constraints, fiscal pressures, and the complexity of issues.

Specific behaviours and attitudes on the part of stakeholders will help make the kinds of public policies needed in the

fiscally restrained and globally competitive world of which Canada is a part. For some key players, new understandings are required; for others, it is skills that are missing. For all, however, success depends on a commitment to a consultative culture based on collaboration and cooperation.

This guide is intended to foster a more collaborative and consultative culture in Canada, particularly in the public sector. It is offered primarily to public service managers to help them conduct public consultation effectively.



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# Chapter 2

## Understanding Public Consultation

### What Is It?

**I**<sup>N THIS SECTION WE LOOK AT</sup> some of the diverse perspectives on what public consultation is and how it can be used. The quotations in this section come from various individuals and groups that have considered public consultation and its uses.

For example, the International Association for Public Participation sees consultation as

- a process and a result
- an exchange of information, discussion and decision making
- an investment of time, energy and resources
- a tool for achieving an end
- a recognition of the legitimacy of public concerns and input
- an understanding that public participation results in greater effectiveness and legitimacy in decision making
- a recognition of the values and cultures of others
- an act of sharing power
- an opportunity for innovation, creativity, improved service and conflict resolution
- a consensus-seeking process
- an act of relationship building
- a learning experience.



The situations that lend themselves to public consultation are likewise numerous and diverse. According to the Saskatchewan Department of Environment and Resource Management, consultation should be considered under the following circumstances:

- as a vehicle for formal or informal dialogue
- to assist in government decision making when developing strategy, policy or programs or delivering a product or program
- when monitoring or evaluating existing strategy, policy and programs
- when trade-offs are required
- when there is an imbalance between what the department/government can supply and what the public demands
- when a public perspective is necessary
- when outside expertise, opinion and/or enthusiasm are needed (Saskatchewan, 1994).

Summarizing the perspectives found in other sources, public consultation is also

- one of many opportunities for public/government interaction

To consult means to seek the advice or opinion of someone. It is a two-way process. In the public policy context, consultation refers to deliberations between government and Citizen. *Service to the Public Task Force Report, Public Service 2000*

Consultation is the direct exchange of ideas, perceptions and advice among and between people. *Industry, Science and Technology Canada, Consultation Guide, Our Knowledge Builds Competitiveness*

An interactive and iterative process in which the attitudes, ideas and involvement of stakeholders are encouraged and seriously considered, in the development of policy and the design and delivery of government programs. *Paul Tellier, former Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to Cabinet*

Public consultation is a process involving interactive or two-way communication between the ministry and the public, through which both become informed about different perspectives on issues and proposals, providing the public with the opportunity to *influence* decisions to be made by the ministry... [it is] an ongoing process involving communication and interaction between government and the public. *Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy, 1994*

- one of several modes of public involvement in public policy decision making (other modes include participation, mediation and arbitration)
- communication with the public for

the purposes of information, public relations, education and social marketing

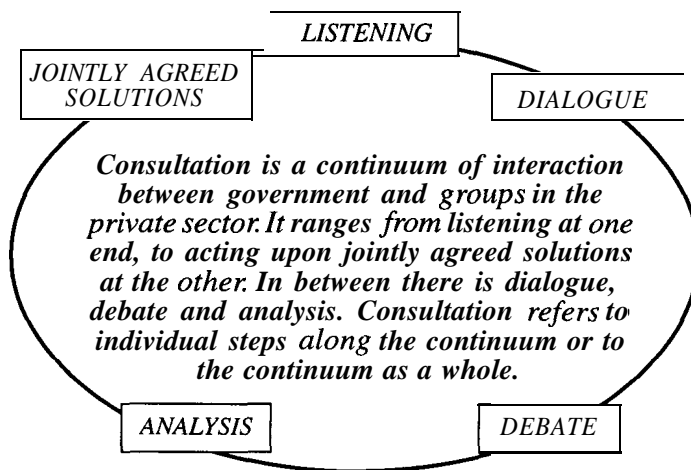
- a unique and vital knowledge source, at the core of knowledge-gathering and knowledge-sharing strategies
- not so much a specific activity as a way of doing business — a way of establishing and maintaining effective working relationships.

In a document prepared to guide consultation and partnerships with

Canadians, Environment Canada describes public consultation as a continuing dialogue among stakeholders aimed at obtaining all the relevant information, evaluating the available options and their related consequences, and providing an objectively balanced perspective to each stakeholder's decision making. It is part of the decision-making process, not a substitute for it. It is an act of

- power sharing, where participants are open to influencing each other's decisions

**FIGURE 1**  
Building Effective Consultations



Source: Bryce-Lambert Forum, *Building Effective Consultations* (28-29 May 1990).

- relationship building, where participants learn to trust and respect each other and to support the relationship into the implementation and partnership phase
- self-revealing, where the vision and values of each participant are visible as they attempt to come to collaborative solutions
- bridging cultures, between the cultures of governments and others, or between the various disciplines in the environmental field, or even our age and region (Environment Canada, 1992).

Public consultation is a strategy designed to involve the general public and thereby generate trust. A well-designed public consultation program ensures that the public feels listened to. Even unpopular decisions, such as new taxes, can be accepted by the public if the consultation process is perceived as having integrity.

Stakeholder consultation invites those with direct interests to be involved in the decision-making process. Stakeholders may be invited to provide their views for consideration by the decision-maker, or the decision-maker may actively engage stakeholders in jointly determining priorities and developing appropriate solutions. Complex issues often require several rounds of highly interactive stakeholder involvement. *Patterson Kirk Wallace, 1991*

Formal, structured dialogue between government and the public to achieve a common understanding of an issue or policy, and to receive input and advice for acceptable solutions. *Saskatchewan, 1994*

Good consultations walk a fine line between having a clear sense of direction and being open to the views and information brought by an interested public. The purpose of consultations is rarely to achieve consensus, but it is often to help test and refine options as part of determining how to go forward. *Task Force on Strengthening the Policy Capacity of the Federal Government, 1995*

In the context of delivering quality services, consultation is a process that permits and promotes the two-way flow of information between clients of government services and the government. Consultation also makes Canadians more aware of the services government provides. *Treasury Board, 1995*

Consultation, while increasingly important in the development of high performing organizations of all kinds, is a dynamic process aimed at creating the best strategies for change and creating a climate which supports continuous change...a dynamic process aimed at creating opportunities for change for organizations which reflect strategic intent, but which also reflect the needs and concerns of their stakeholders...the aim is not to achieve consensus, but ownership of change... *McMillan and Murgatroyd, 1994*

Another way of looking at public consultation is to consider what needs are being served by the process. Government and the public have different needs, as suggested in the following lists. The difference in the number of needs listed under *the government* and *the public* is not a true reflection of the relative impact and importance of effective public consultation to both sides. The common goal is better programs and services through the educated and influential involvement of the public in policy making.

Consultation is a means for *the government* to

- collect information needed for policy making
- enhance involvement of the public in matters of direct and indirect interest to them
- involve groups from outside government in public policy development and implementation
- gauge the impact of public policy decisions on a particular group or set of groups
- acquire input on controversial decisions that will affect the economic, social or political interests of some people or groups more than others
- find solutions to problems of interest to more than one group, within and/or outside government
- determine the level of support for a proposed initiative or idea
- gain public support for a proposed action or decision
- improve the quality of public policy decision making, on matters of substance and process
- facilitate the exchange of views, ideas and information
- establish common links
- seek consensus
- consider stakeholder priorities, needs and concerns
- improve service to the public
- inform/educate the public
- reduce public cynicism and apathy in matters of public interest
- encourage non-adversarial, collaborative and cooperative relationships with stakeholders and citizens
- influence the course of public policy.

Consultation is an opportunity for members of *the public* to

- improve the quality of public policy
- participate in democracy
- secure better programs and service delivery
- understand and support a decision
- have input when they have something to win or lose by a decision.

### ***Organizational Culture and Consultation Design***

There is often a relationship between the culture of an organization, the consultation design it favours, and how it defines consultation. For example,

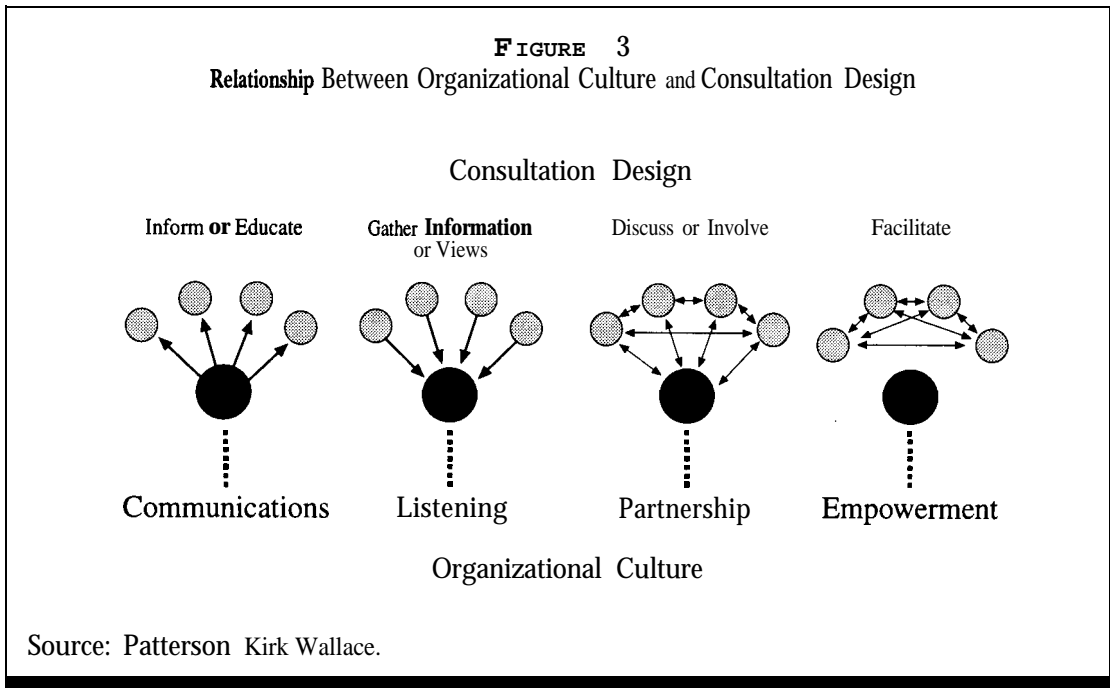
- When government or an organization is essentially in a *communications mode*, the purpose of consultation is

often to get information out to the public, to educate, to inform or to provide feedback, and consultations are designed accordingly. In these circumstances, consultation has little if any role in decision making.

- When an organization is primarily in a *listening mode*, the purpose of consultation is to gather information from the public, and the consultation design promotes this objective. Commissions of inquiry often operate in this manner. The role of the public input in decision making is greater in this mode than when the organization is in a communications mode. A note of caution: if the primary purpose of the consultation is to gather information, there may be no firm commitment on the part of government to do anything with the views collected. Unless those being consulted are advised at the outset, this may become a source of frustration.

<b>FIGURE~</b>	
Organizational Culture and Consultation Design	
<i>If the organization's culture promotes...</i>	<i>... the goal of the consultation design may be to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communications</li> <li>• listening</li> <li>• collaboration/partnership</li> <li>• empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inform or educate (<i>information out</i>)</li> <li>• gather information/views (<i>information in</i>)</li> <li>• discuss or involve (<i>information exchange</i>)</li> <li>• facilitate solutions</li> </ul>

- When government is in a *mode of collaboration and partnership* with those likely to be affected and those interested in the public policy issue at stake, consultation is designed to encourage discussion among and with stakeholders. In this case, it is likely that a decision has not been made and that the consultation initiative is intended to encourage government officials and stakeholders to generate options together. This can result in two-way information exchange between government and Canadians.
  - Finally, when an organization has adopted an *empowerment mode* in relation to its stakeholders, who in turn have accepted the challenge of coming up with solutions, the organization plays the role of facilitator or enabler. The consultation design calls for discussion among stakeholders.
- The accompanying figures reflect these variations in organizational culture and consultation objectives.



## Principles for Consultation

The 1990 report of the Task Force on Service to the Public, *Public Service 2000*, provided the following list of principles for public consultation. These principles for effective consultation formed the foundation of a Privy Council Office document, “Draft Consultation Guidelines for Managers in the Federal Public Service,” issued in December 1991. This document is still the main quasi-official guidelines available to federal departments and agencies. These are the *PS 2000* principles:

1. Consultation between government and the public is intrinsic to effective public policy development and service to the public. It should be a first thought, not an afterthought.
2. Mutual respect for the legitimacy and point of view of all participants is basic to successful consultation.
3. Whenever possible, consultation should involve all parties who can contribute to or are affected by the outcome of consultation.
4. Some participants may not have the resources or expertise required to participate, and financial assistance or other support may be needed for their representation to be assured.
5. The initiative to consult may come from inside government or outside — it should be up to the other to respond.
6. The agenda and process of consultation should be negotiable. The issues, objectives and constraints should be established at the outset.
7. The outcome of consultation should not be predetermined. Consultation should not be used to communicate decisions already taken.
8. A clear, mutual understanding of the purpose and the expectations of all parties to the consultation is essential from the outset.
9. The skills required for effective consultation are listening, communicating, negotiating and consensus building. Participants should be trained in these skills.
10. To be effective, consultation must be based on values of openness, honesty, trust and transparency of purpose and process.
11. Participants in a consultation should have clear mandates. Participants

should have influence over the outcome and a stake in implementing any action agreed upon.

indirectly involved in the process, with particular attention to decision makers and participants.

12. All participants must have reasonable access to relevant information and commit themselves to sharing information.
13. Participants should have a realistic idea of how much time a consultation is likely to take and plan for this in designing the process.
14. Effective consultation is about partnership. It implies a shared responsibility and ownership of the process and the outcome.
15. Effective consultation will not always lead to agreement; however, it should lead to a better understanding of each other's positions.
16. Where consultation does lead to agreement, wherever possible, participants should hold themselves accountable for implementing the resulting recommendations.

To this list of principles we would add the following:

17. Effective consultation requires clear feedback and continuing communication with all those directly and

The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (1993) also listed guiding principles for processes intended to produce consensus through consultation. As the round table report points out, consensus processes are participant determined and driven — that is their essence. No single approach will work for every situation: because of the issues involved, interests and circumstances vary. At the same time, experience points to certain characteristics that are fundamental to consensus — these are the guiding principles identified by the round table:

1. *Purpose Driven.* People need a reason to participate in the process.
2. *Inclusive, Not Exclusive.* All parties with a significant interest in the issue should be involved in the consensus/consultation process.
3. *Voluntary Participation.* Parties that are affected or interested participate voluntarily.
4. *Self-Design.* The parties design the consensus/consultation process.
5. *Flexibility.* Flexibility should be designed into the process.



6. *Equal Opportunity.* All parties must have equal access to relevant information and the opportunity to participate effectively throughout the process.
7. *Respect for Diverse Interests.* Acceptance of the diverse values, interests, and knowledge of the parties involved in the consensus/consultation process is essential.
8. *Accountability.* The parties are accountable both to their constituencies and to the process they have agreed to establish.
9. *Time Limits.* Realistic deadlines are necessary throughout the process.
10. *Implementation.* Commitment to implementation and effective monitoring are essential parts of any agreement/outcome.

The February 1995 (and final) edition of *in public*, a Canadian public consultation newsletter, listed a generic mission statement and eight public involvement principles for public involvement processes to improve the effectiveness, fairness and durability of outcomes. These are shown in Figure 4.

In material developed for use in a 1992 pilot course on public consultation, the

Ontario Ministry of the Environment enunciated five principles of public consultation:

- emphasize consensus building
- be objective, open and fair with due consideration of time and cost
- evaluate public input
- define requirements clearly for how and when public can participate
- provide public with response.

FIGURE~  
Mission and Principles

**Mission:**

To achieve decisions and results that respect the knowledge, values and rights of all affected interests.

**Principles:**

- shared process
- respect
- commitment
- timeliness
- relationships
- communication
- responsiveness
- accountability

Finally, departments should consult when there is a reasonable chance that the results of the consultation can affect the decision. They should not consult when a final decision has already been made, if they have neither the mandate nor the authority to make or change a final decision, and/or when insufficient time and/or resources are available.

## Some Measures for Success

In designing a consultation process, it is important to identify the factors that will determine whether the initiative has been a success. Given the broad array of objectives that public consultation initiatives can serve, evaluation processes and measures of success are likely to be diverse. Nevertheless, success in achieving the objectives set for the consultation process should be measured.

Sometimes a public consultation is judged a success because one or more of the following objectives has been reached.

- Our position was accepted.
  - Our objective was achieved.
  - We reached consensus.
  - We avoided conflict.
  - We had a large number of participants.
  - The process was efficient.
  - We used many consultation mechanisms.
- These are not necessarily appropriate measures of success. They may be desirable results of consultation, but by themselves they do not constitute success. More appropriate measures of success involve assessments of whether
- the interests of all parties have been served
  - expectations concerning the process have been met
  - consensus, consent and commitment have emerged
  - the process has encouraged generation of the best possible options
  - objective criteria have been used to assess the different options under consideration
  - understanding has been enhanced
  - the relationship has been enhanced

- the decisions resulting from consultation have been stable and enduring.

What makes consultations work? According to the Environment Canada document quoted earlier, consultation processes tend to work better with

- a coordinated effort and synergy throughout a department, across departments and between governments
- trained and skilled practitioners, both in managing and in participating in consultations with a level of authority appropriate to their role
- participants and leaders who enjoy working with people, who are comfortable with dialogue, discussion, debate and disagreement, and who can manage conflict and differences
- an informed, organized and empowered team to match the capabilities of the stakeholders (including the use of facilitators or key experts)
- an adequate investment of time and resources to make the consultation productive, including financial assistance for participants with a vital interest in the issue but lacking the resources to join the process
- effective management of information in relation to the consultation initiative (from the preconsultation meeting to follow-up), internal decision makers and the need for practitioners to access the corporate memory (lessons learned)
- particular attention to logistics (location, room set-up) and scheduling (when and to whom to send invitations, how participants may provide input, time of day).

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# Chapter 3

## Frameworks for Thinking About Public Consultation

**T**HE FOUR MODELS OR FRAMEWORKS for public consultation discussed in this chapter (see Figure 5) help in understanding what consultation is all about. Each has a somewhat different slant or approach, and each will be useful at different stages in the consultation initiative, depending on the perspective of the principals involved, whether they are decision makers, managers or teams, citizens, or stakeholders.

To understand the overall approach and how the models work together, think of a farmer with a field of hay he wants to sell. To get the hay to market, the farmer needs a conveyance. At the *conceptual* level, he envisages some sort of cart. Then, thinking *strategically*, he realizes that it will take some force to move the loaded cart over rough terrain for some distance, so decides to use the greater strength of his horse. The farmer then

**F I G U R E ~**  
Four Frameworks for Consultation

*The 4-P Pyramid Model* — a conceptual framework  
*The Topographical Model* — a strategic framework  
*The Rubick's Cube Model* — a planning framework  
*The Roadmap Model* — a process framework

enters the *planning* phase: he considers the size and shape of the cart, the load the horse can reasonably pull, a method of harnessing the horse to the cart, and the size and type of wheel needed to make the whole effort easier. Finally he begins the *process*, assembling the needed materials, building the cart, harvesting the hay, loading the cart, harnessing the horse — probably modifying his original plans as he goes along — and heads off to market.

The goal — getting the hay to market — does not change, but the approach needed to complete each step successfully does change. Each stage emerges from the previous stages, but each requires a different level of detail in information and thinking and a somewhat different focus.

The four consultation frameworks fit together in much the same way. At the outset, when a significant issue is emerging and the decision has been taken to deal with it (at least in part) through consultation, a conceptual understanding is important: an idea of the facets and dimensions of the issue and a rough outline of the parameters of a potential consultation. Once it is agreed that the issue warrants further attention, the next level of interest is strategic. Each successive stage operates at a higher level of detail, culminating in a step-by-step roadmap for conducting a successful consultation.

Senior managers and decision makers tend to fulfil their role at the first two stages — the conceptual and strategic stages. The final stage — the roadmap for the process — calls for the detailed involvement of the consultation manager and event team. Even so, participants need to know about each stage. For example, the consultation manager may find the conceptual model

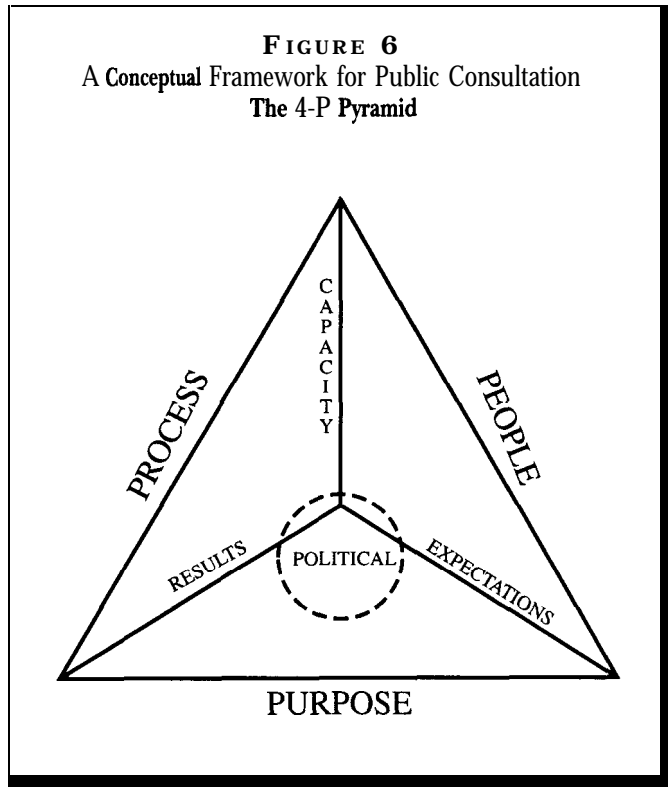
useful in explaining the situation to a stakeholder or at a public information meeting.

In summary, each model applies to one stage of a public consultation process, and together they provide a complete understanding of that process, from concept (here's the issue) to process details (ensure that stakeholder A has access through a toll-free telephone line) .

## **A Conceptual Framework: The 4-P Pyramid Model**

The first stage of the process is conceptual — here is the issue, and we are going to deal with it in part through public consultation. The conceptual framework portrays consultation as a pyramid (Figure 6). At the base of the pyramid is the current political agenda, which creates the context for the issue or decision under consideration and the environment in which the consultation will take place. The purpose of the consultation must be aligned with the people whose input is required and with the process used to gather and analyse the information received.

The interplay between process and purpose affects the results of the consul-



tation. The declared purpose of the consultation sets up expectations in the people involved, who come to a consultation with certain expectations of their own. The capacity of both the people involved in a consultation and the process used to conduct it have a direct impact on the success of the initiative. The better the alignment between the four Ps — politics, process, purpose and people — the greater the likelihood of an effective public consultation process.

### *Politics*

The political dimension may affect any or all of the other dimensions. Consider the following questions:

- What priority has the exercise in the government's agenda?
- What is the social, economic and political context of the consultation?
- How will existing or potential political issues related to the consultation be identified and addressed?
- How will risks be assessed, decisions be reached and appropriate modifications in the consultation strategy be made?

### *Purpose*

The expectations of everyone involved should be aligned with the overall purpose of the consultation. When expectations are unclear or inconsistent, the ability to satisfy the purpose of the consultation may be compromised, or at least problematic. Consider the following questions:

- What is the objective of the consultation?
- Are there any internal/external controversial issues and constraints?
- What specific outcomes are expected?
- Is the mandate clear, and has it received the necessary support?
- What expectations do stakeholders have?
- How will the program manager/team plan and implement improvements in their consultation practices?
- Is the consultation strategy based on a collaborative, competitive or negotiated approach, or a combination of these?
- Has a communications plan been prepared?
- How much time is there to conduct the consultations, to learn from each other, to understand each other and share views?

### ***Process***

The results of a consultation are a function of the effectiveness of the process, and will be reviewed in the context of the original purpose. Consider the following questions:

- Is there a need to create a special consultation team to manage the initiative?
- What methods are most applicable to the needs of both decision makers and stakeholders?
- Is the use of an objective third-party facilitator desirable?
- How will the program manager/team benefit from others' experiences and best practices?

### ***People***

The capacity of the people to contribute to the initiative in a significant manner must be considered in developing the process and selecting consultation mechanisms. Think about the following questions:

- What stakeholders are involved and what is their point of view?
- What challenges lie before the stakeholders?
- What is the nature of the relationship between the organization and the stakeholder groups?

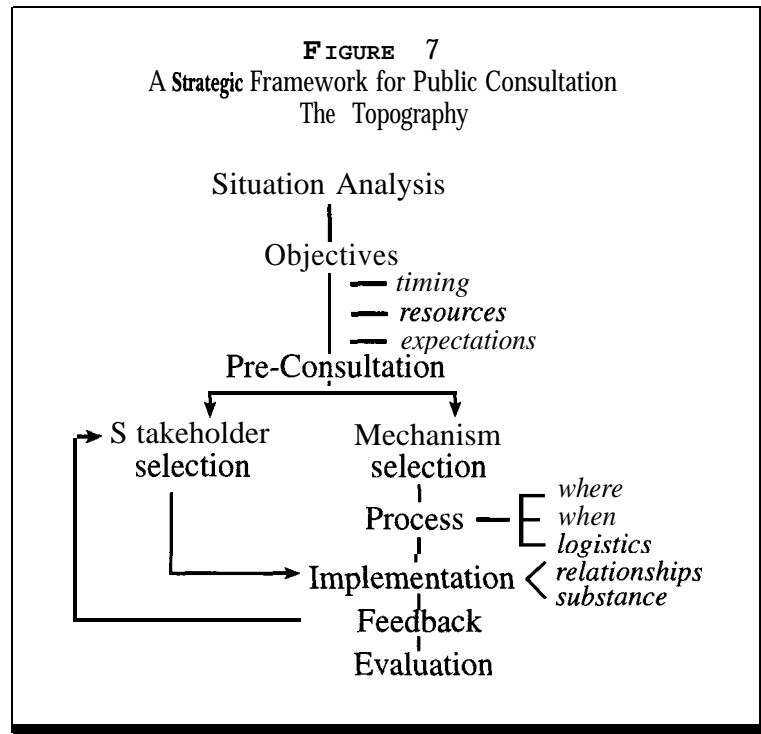
## A Strategic Framework: The Topographical Model

At the second stage, another level of thinking and a different set of information requirements come into play. Consultation is considered in the context of other initiatives. A strategic framework is helpful in assessing the lay of the land — looking at the “terrain” (the major elements of effective public consultation) in strategic terms. This can begin with a situation analysis, proceed through setting objectives, holding a pre-consultation meeting to assess choices about stakeholders, mechanisms and process, and culminate in implementation, feedback and evaluation.

A strategic approach involves the following sequence of steps in planning a public consultation:

- analyse the situation
- determine objectives in terms of timing, resources, and expectations

- hold a pre-consultation meeting
- select stakeholders — who will then be involved both in implementation and in providing feedback
- select the consultation mechanism
- establish the process — where, when, and the logistics
- implement, paying attention to both relationships and substance
- solicit feedback
- evaluate.

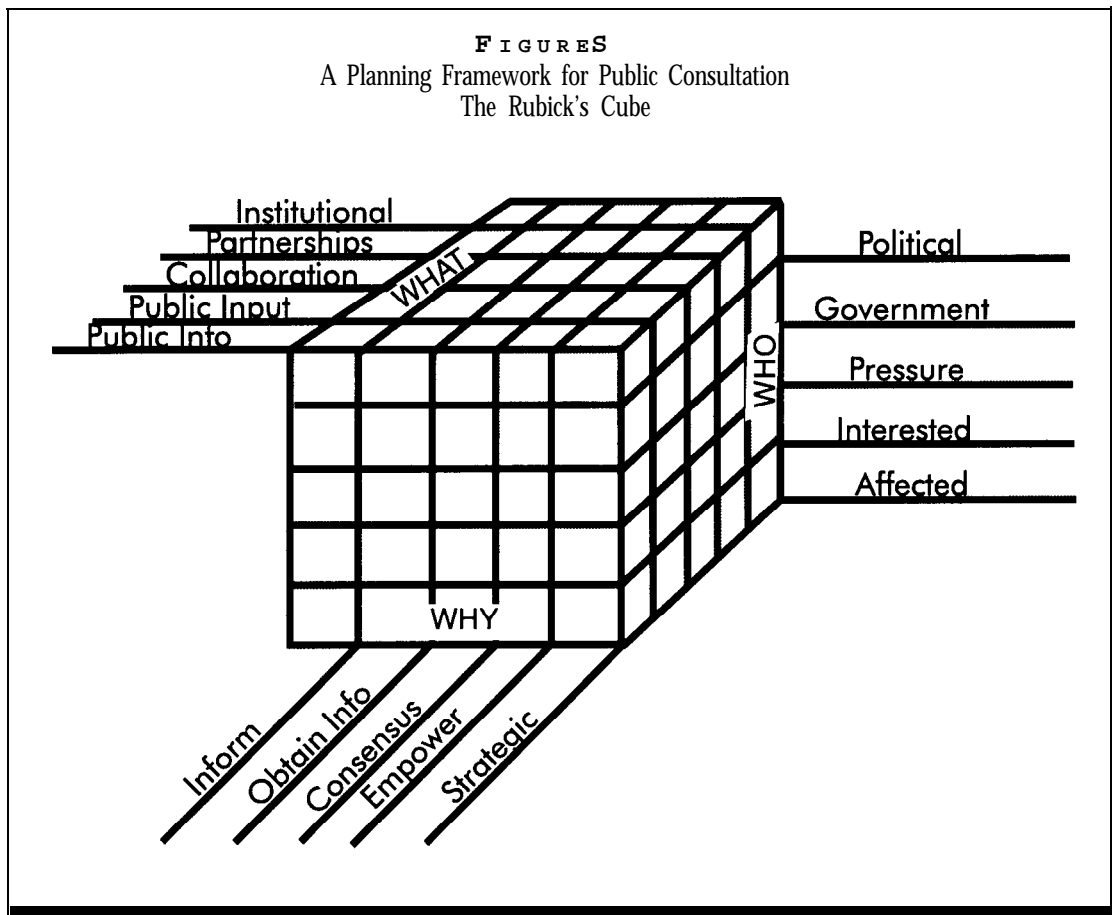




## A Planning Framework: The Rubick's Cube Mode1

The third approach, different from the previous two, concerns how the task will be done. At this stage, the consultation is closer to becoming a reality, and a planning framework will be helpful.

Planning a consultation process involves the correct alignment of the all "pieces" of the task — much like aligning the colours of a Rubick's Cube puzzle. One surface of the consultation "cube" is the why (the objective), which must be aligned not only internally but also with the who (stakeholders and other participants) and the what (the process intended to obtain their input).



### *Why*

clarifies whether the purpose of the consultation is to

- inform — information out, educate
- obtain information — information in
- seek consensus
- empower
- be strategic.

### *Who*

identifies the stakeholders, those with the information necessary to achieve the objectives of the consultation process

- political
- government
- pressure groups
- interested public
- those affected, directly or indirectly.

### *What*

concerns the different styles of relationships between and among stakeholders, which tend to lead to different structures.

For example, departments can establish advisory councils or panels, which tend to be a somewhat formal approach to consultation. Relationship styles in turn dictate which processes, mechanisms, and techniques can be used most effectively in dealing with stakeholders:

- institutional — departments have established institutionalized mechanisms such as advisory councils
- partnership — arrangements with clear roles and responsibilities with empowered partners
- collaboration — cooperative arrangements with joint decision making
- public input — processes allowing government to listen to stakeholders
- public information — processes where government transmits information to stakeholders.

## **A Process Framework: The Roadmap Model**

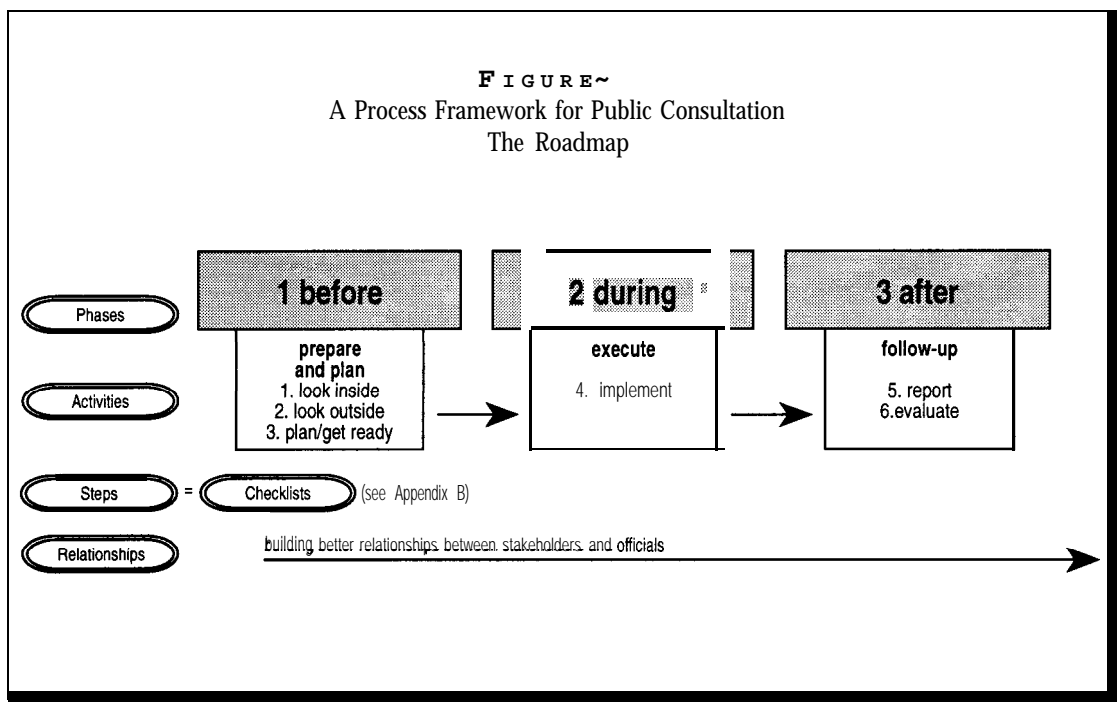
For the farmer and his load of hay, the final stage is taking the steps needed to move from idea to reality — assembling materials, building the cart, loading the cart, harnessing the horse, charting a route, anticipating possible difficulties

along the way and planning how to deal with them, and starting out on the journey. At this fourth stage of consultation planning, yet another level of detail and a practical focus come into play.

The roadmap model is a what-to-do-when approach to consultation. The framework envisages consultation unfolding in three distinct phases — before, during and after. This is intended to serve as a guide from the beginning to the end of an effective consultative journey, building better

relations with and between stakeholders and officials along the way.

As the Public Policy Forum observed in a 1994 publication, “Good process does not automatically guarantee sound public policy. But we know from experience that poor process rarely gives good policy.” Process is important in consultation, so we have devoted a full chapter to this process-oriented model. The model is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and is reviewed in checklist format in Appendix B.



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# Chapter 4

## A Process Framework: The Roadmap Model

**T**HE WHAT-TO-DO-WHEN APPROACH of the roadmap model is based on developing and carrying out a consultation in three stages: before, during and after (see Figure 10). The process involves six activities in all, and accomplishing them requires 51 steps or checklist items (see Appendix B for a summary of the model in checklist form). Three of the activities

are undertaken in Phase 1, one activity in Phase 2, and two activities in Phase 3.

The roadmap model is intended to guide the consultation manager and team from the beginning to the end of an effective consultation process, building better relations between stakeholders and officials along the way.

### **FIGURE 10**

#### Phases of Consultation

##### *Phase 1: Before Consultation*

Activity 1: Look inside

Activity 2: Look outside

Activity 3: Plan/get ready

##### *Phase 2: During Consultation*

Activity 4: Implement plan

##### *Phase 3: After Consultation*

Activity 5: Report

Activity 6: Evaluate

### **PHASE 1**

### **Before Consultation**

*(3 activities, 36 steps)*

This first phase allows the manager to test the waters and plan. Before jumping into a consultation process, it is advisable to assess both the situation and the context in which the consultation will be conducted. In general, this calls for the manager to

- identify the major issues that could be raised
- determine the likely level of public interest
- identify the most appropriate participants/organizations/associations and the key individuals who will represent them
- ascertain the major interests of all parties.

This requires the manager to look inside and outside the organization and to plan to consult, if indeed the initial assessment points in that direction. (Following the initial assessment, it could be that the wisest course would be not to consult, or not to consult on this issue with these stakeholders at this particular time.) In the next few pages we outline the activities and steps that make up the pre-consultation phase in an annotated checklist of three main activities and 36 steps.

**Activity 1: Look Inside**  
(6 steps)

*1. Review/scan/analyse the environment*

At the political level, consider the following:

- political commitment — is the issue

associated with a commitment or priority of the party in power?

- government agenda — is the issue a current government agenda item?
- mandate — what point has the government reached in its term of office?
- speech from the throne/budget speech — has the issue been mentioned in one of these statements? Will it be mentioned or considered in the near future?
- government priorities — is the issue related to a government priority?

Within the department, it is helpful to

- understand decision-making processes and players
- identify support and opposition
- secure support and buy-in from departmental colleagues and decision makers on the consultation by investing time and attention in their concerns at the beginning of the process.

In addition to these considerations, several techniques or tools can assist in carrying out environmental scans. These techniques provide ways to organize

information on which to base decisions. Two of these techniques are SWOT and force field analysis.

The acronym SWOT describes four key aspects for analyzing the context in which a consultation will be undertaken: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (see Figure 11).

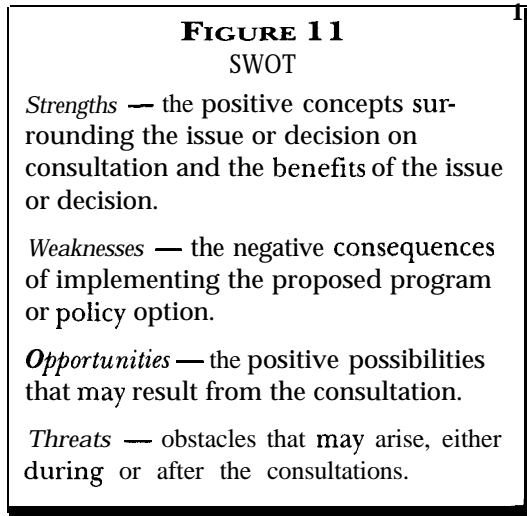
In other words, the consultation manager/team must

- list the strengths of the proposed consultation
- list the weaknesses
- identify opportunities that the consultation might present
- identify threats to the consultation proposal.

Other important factors might be worthy of notice at this stage, and they should also be articulated in this analysis. SWOT analysis can also be applied to the draft consultation plan developed later in the pre-consultation phase.

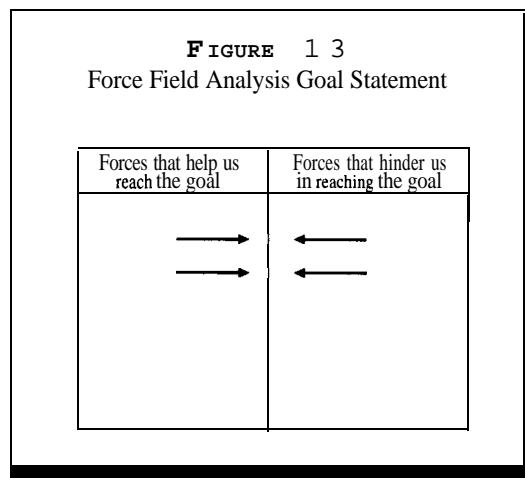
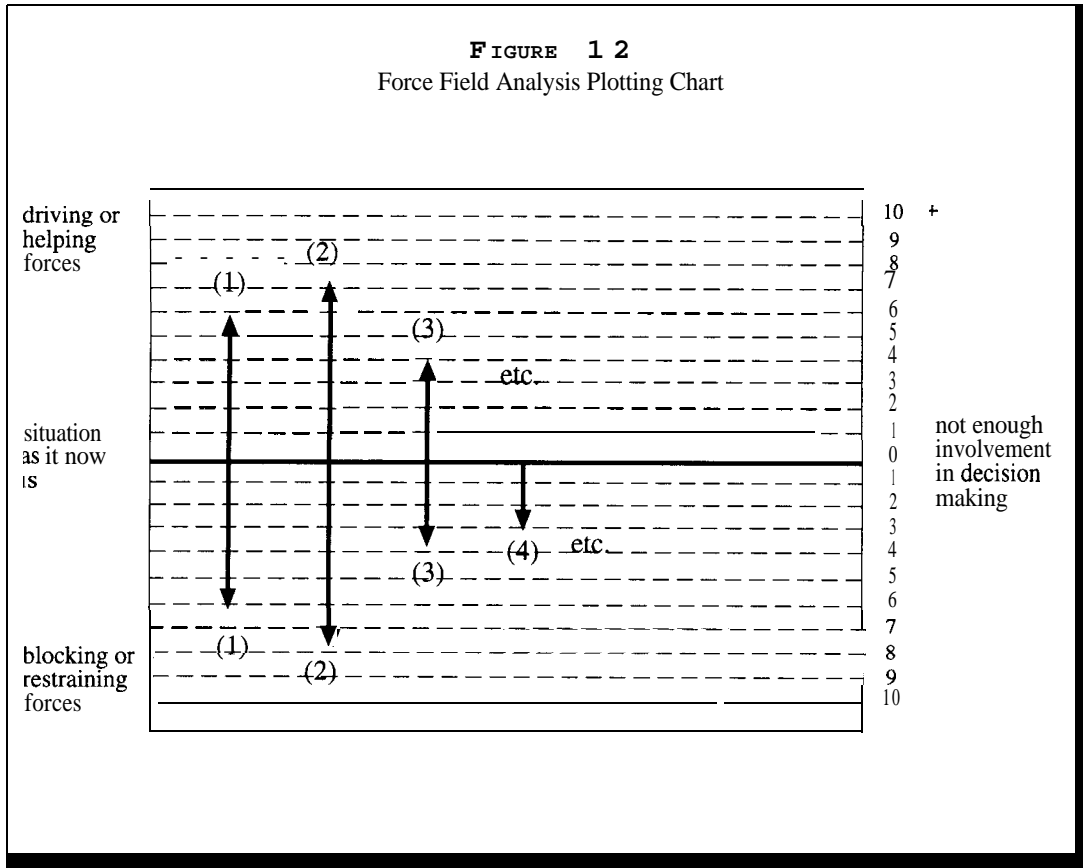
The second technique, force field analysis, is a process to identify driving and restraining forces. This tool requires the manager/team to

- list all the forces that will help reach



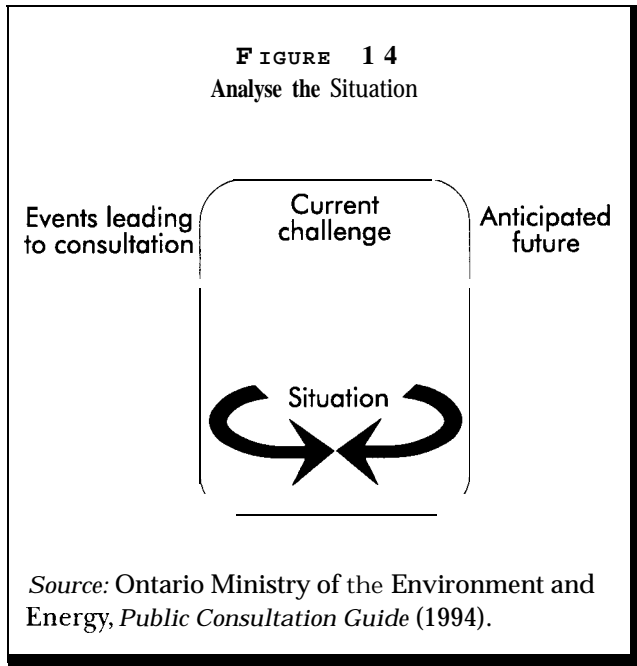
the goal; these are factors that are now in the picture (in the field) that will be driving forces (+) toward the goal (see Figure 12)

- do the same for the blocks or hindering/restraining forces (-)
- when all the driving and restraining forces have been listed, plot them on a force field, deciding on the strength of each force as it is plotted. How strong or important are the forces in relation to reaching or blocking achievement of the goal?
- brainstorm to discover what can be done to diminish or eliminate the strongest negative force or forces
- strengthen the positive forces (again, using brainstorming)



- combine strong positives, if possible; remove negative forces, if possible; find ways to turn a strong negative into a positive
- usually the best payoff comes from diminishing or removing the strongest “do-able” negative force(s) ; starting there, brainstorm to identify all the alternative actions that could be taken.

Force field analysis can also be applied to the draft consultation plan prepared later in the pre-consultation phase.



## 2. Situate the consultation exercise

It makes good sense to see how the proposed program/exercise fits into the government’s, the minister’s and the department’s agenda. It will also be useful to identify other consultations that may be under way or have already occurred involving the same stakeholders.

## 3. Analyse the situation: determine other special characteristics of the situation

It is prudent to analyse the situation to understand the events leading to the consultation, the current challenge, and the anticipated future, once the consultations are over and the decisions made (see Figure 14).

## 4. Identify relevant statutes or programs

Some legislation, regulations or programs require departments to consult the public before taking certain action. The manager should know whether this is why a consultation is being planned.

## 5. Identify the department’s decision-making process

A knowledge of the procedures and players in the department’s decision-making process will be needed so that decisions related to the planned consultation can be assured smoothly and effectively.



### 6. *Learn from experience*

Lessons learned and best practices from other departments and colleagues who have managed consultations can be instructive. The manager might also wish to consult <sup>CCMD</sup> faculty and literature, PCO officials, federal consultation practitioners, and others in the private sector and at other levels of government.

### **Activity 2: Look Outside** (5 steps)

#### 7. *Review/scan/analyse the environment*

Scanning the environment outside the department and government can help the manager assess the importance of and context for the issue. The manager could

- look at the trends and assumptions surrounding the issue — through media analyses, review of reports and other documents published by organizations interested in the issue, monitoring of community activity and interests related to the issue
- identify the critical relationships among stakeholders and decision makers necessary for the consultation to succeed

- identify support and opposition to the exercise and how to work with both forces
- coordinate consultation planning and, if possible, implementation within the department and with other agencies, levels of government, private sector groups, and others.

The same techniques offered earlier — SWOT and force field analysis — could prove useful for the environmental scan.

#### 8. *Situate the consultation exercise*

Determine how the proposed program/exercise fits into the schedules and plans of key stakeholders. For example, a consultation could be piggybacked on a regular meeting (annual, monthly, weekly) or on regional or provincial/territorial gatherings of stakeholders. Alternatively, the manager might wish to avoid holding a consultation that would conflict with stakeholder meetings.

#### 9. *Analyse the situation: determine other special characteristics of the situation*

From an outside-government perspective, scan for events leading to the consultation, current challenges, and the anticipated future, after the consultation has been completed and decisions have been taken.

10. *Learn from experience*

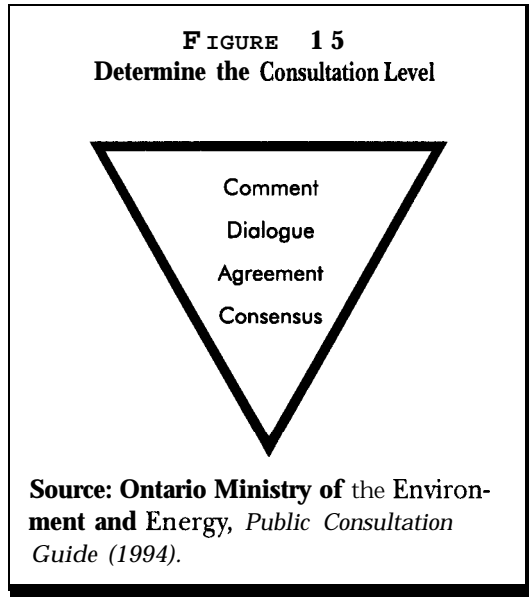
**Review** lessons learned and best practices from the perspective of key stakeholders. Managers could also consult CCMD faculty and literature, PCO officials, federal consultation practitioners, and practitioners at other levels of government and in the private sector.

11. *Determine the level of public interest and appropriate consultation level*

The decision maker is responsible for clarifying the level of consultation required. The consultation manager may need to seek this clarification if it has not been forthcoming. This direction is essential to design a consultation process appropriate to the situation and the degree of conflict or controversy represented by the issue on which the consultation is taking place. Some options for consultation level include those listed in Figure 15.

Other factors that may come into play include the following:

- quantity (number of people consulted) versus quality (level of interaction)
- legal requirements
- policy requirements

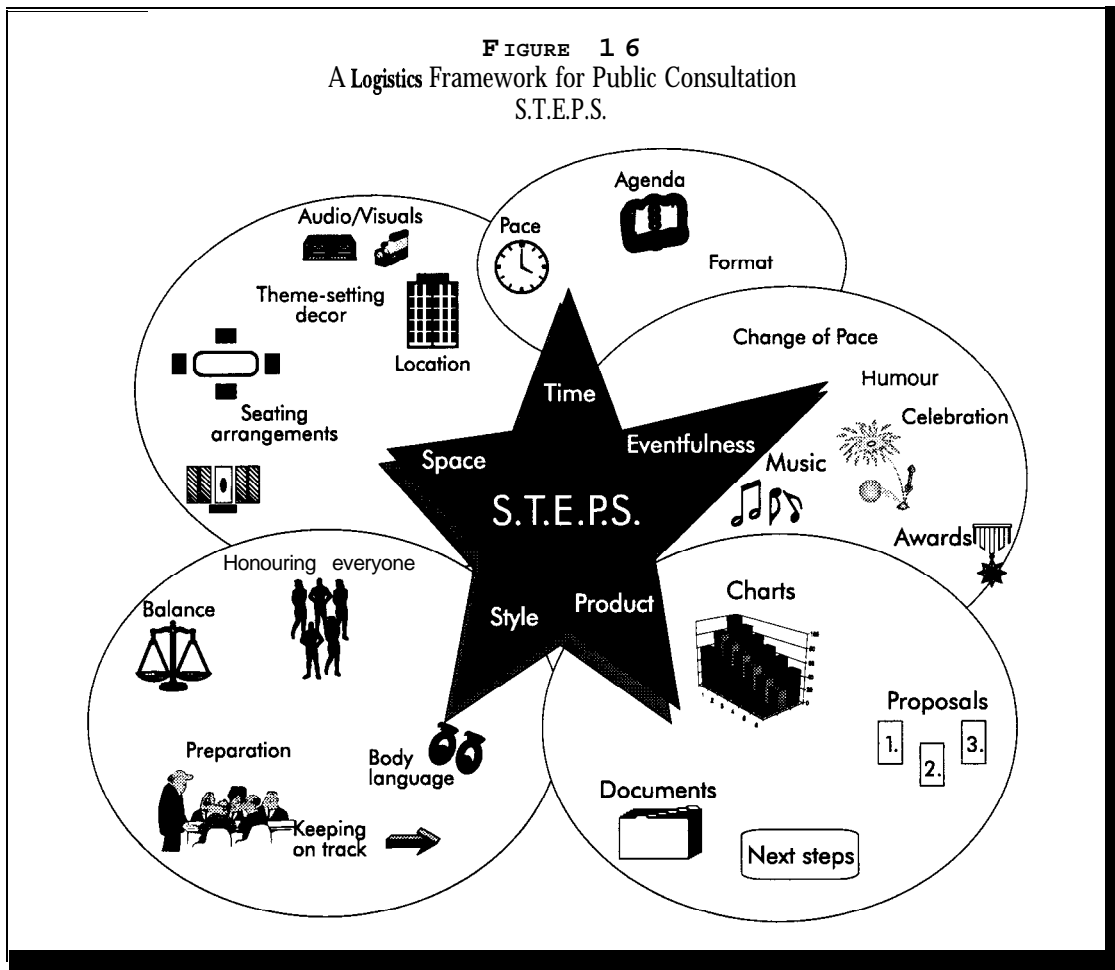


- policy, program, or project phase during which the consultation is to be conducted.

**Activity 3: Plan/Get Ready**  
(25 steps)

The acronym **S.T.E.P.S.** represents five key factors for planning and implementing consultation events. The **S.T.E.P.S.** method provides a model for managing the logistics of a consultation (see Figure 16) .\*

\*Laura J. Spencer for the Institute of Cultural Affairs, *Winning Through Participation, Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation* (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1989).



The five factors are as follows:

*Space:* Careful selection of appropriate space is important for setting the mood of the meeting and influencing the group dynamics constructively. Considerations include location and room selection, seating arrangements, decor, amount of space, and audio-visual facilities.

*Time:* Prudent scheduling and disciplined time management establish the tone and importance of the session. Considerations include date(s), schedule, pace, agenda and adherence to its timeframes, and format.

*Eventfulness:* Sensitive attention to the human dimension of group interaction leads to heightened enthusiasm and

commitment within the group. Examples include ice-breakers, use of music, change-of-pace activities, humour, celebration, and awards.

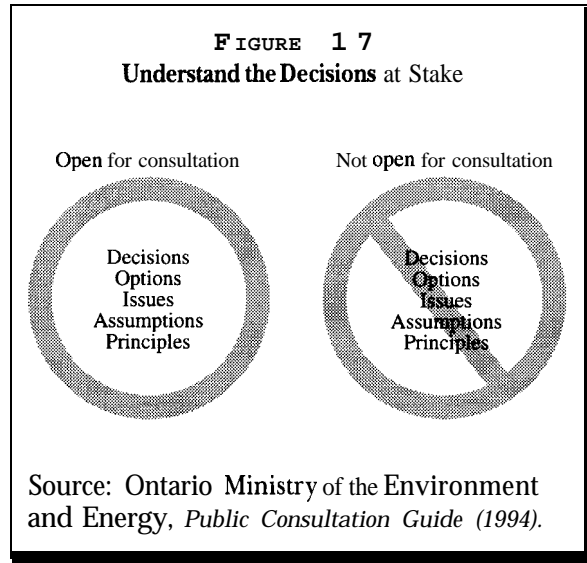
**Product:** Special attention to producing a tangible product strengthens the group's sense of accomplishment and commitment to action. Deliverables might include documents, charts, proposals, plans, and statements of decisions.

**Style:** The facilitator's (or facilitators') image, role and way of relating to the group can affect the overall product. Factors include preparation, honouring everyone, body language, and keeping on track.

12. *Determine the issues and their importance*

Be clear with stakeholders about what is open for consultation and what is not. An approach to this may include: decisions, options, issues, assumptions, and principles (see Figure 17).

For each decision open for consultation, it may be important to disclose which options are being considered and what assumptions are being made with respect to decisions and options. The manager will have to work closely with the decision maker to make this determination.



13. *Hold a pre-consultation meeting*

A consultation process involving stakeholders in its design is likely to have greater success than a process planned unilaterally. Involvement of key stakeholders can be facilitated by inviting them to a pre-consultation meeting, where consensus may emerge on the issues on which the consultation should focus, the profile of stakeholders who should be included (from whom information is essential), the mechanisms to be used, and preferred timing.

14. *Set goals/objectives*

Define clearly the results to be achieved, the objectives of the consultation, and

the results being sought. Inviting stakeholders to be part of the goal-setting exercise is advisable. The earlier stakeholders are involved in the design and goal-setting phase, the greater the likelihood of their commitment to the process and its success.

It is often assumed that the major objective of consultation is to develop consensus about policy and program options. This can be one objective, but there may be others, including

- Obtaining information to make better decisions. Stakeholders provide information through hearings, submissions and other mechanisms. Government listens and makes decisions based on the best information at its disposal.
- Conveying information concerning the status of issues or providing feedback to stakeholders on decisions taken.
- Transferring knowledge and facilitating a better understanding of issues, dispelling myths.
- Empowering stakeholder groups to participate in the decision-making process within defined parameters.
- Developing partnerships, which can take the form of contractual arrange-

ments, alliances, cooperative agreements and other collaborative arrangements that imply joint obligations.

- Serving political strategic objectives.
- Meeting legal requirements to consult, for example, consultations to meet environmental review requirements or negotiation requirements concerning Aboriginal land claims.

Well-formulated objectives should refer to

- decisions, options, and issues that are open to consultation
- the range of stakeholders to be involved
- the type and level of involvement.

They should also be

- SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed)
- clear and understood by all parties
- a joint exercise with stakeholders.

Finally, they should

- take into consideration the public's views and priorities

- clarify expectations and parameters
- answer the question, What is the organization trying to achieve by involving the public?
- three stages: design (**before**) , consult (during), feedback (after) .

16. Clarify mandate and timeframe

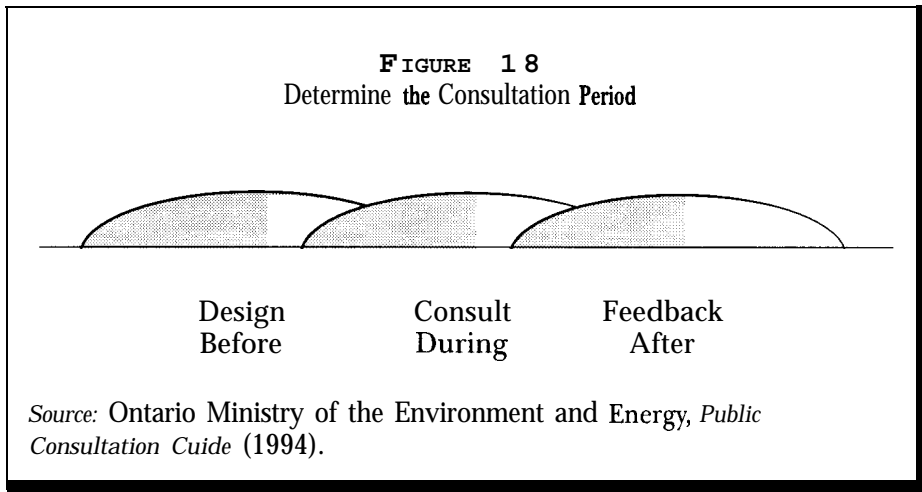
Consultation objectives should be stated explicitly or endorsed by the decision maker and communicated effectively to those being consulted. In other words, from the outset there should be a common understanding on the part of all concerned of what is to be accomplished in the consultation.

All participants should understand the mandate for the consultation and its timeframe. A well-articulated mandate should include the following elements:

15. Determine the consultation period

The following factors come into play in this determination (see Figure 18) :

- urgency of the issue
- timeframe
- terms of reference
- background information
- decisions at stake
- stakeholder analysis
- involvement type
- consultation level
- consultation objectives



- duration of consultation period and decision-making period.

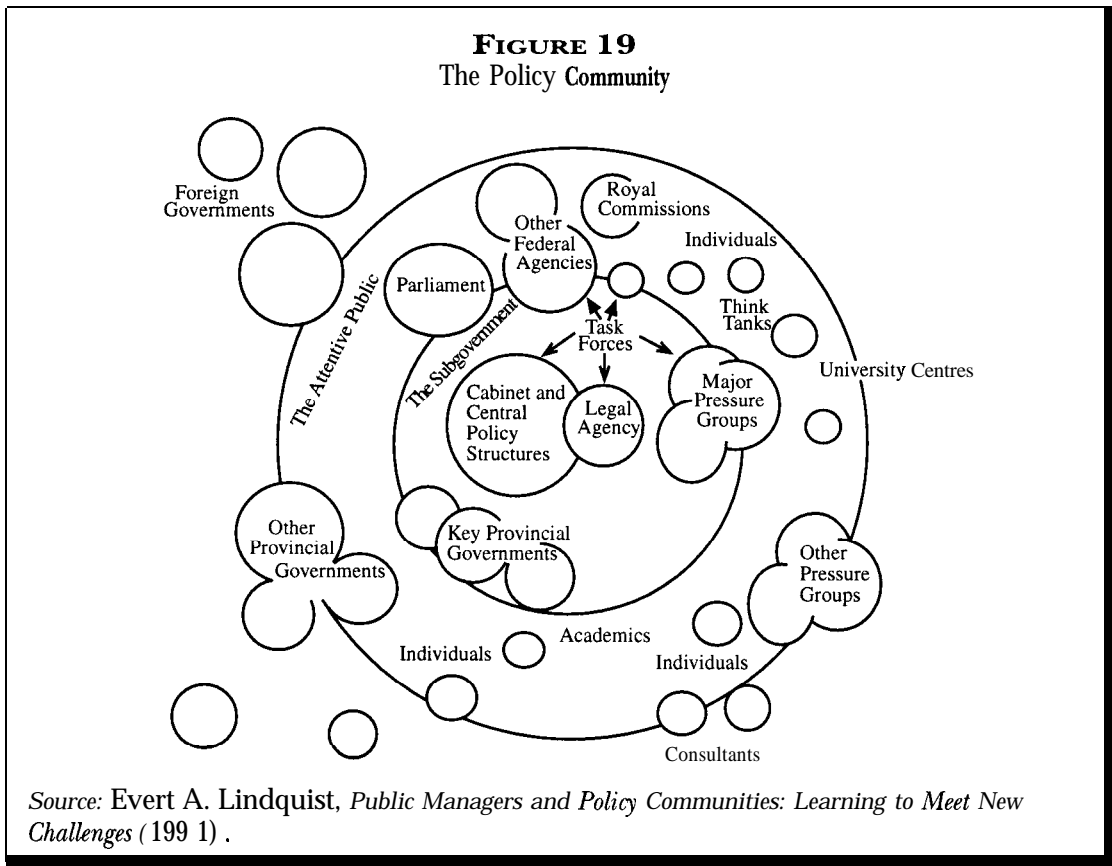
17. *Identify the key players*

The results of this task will have great impact on the quality of the information obtained and the ease with which it is gathered. (Throughout, and certainly at the end of the identification process, each participant selected must have a clear understanding of the objectives and boundaries of the consultation.)

Identifying key players requires the manager to

- analyse and identify the publics, stakeholders, potential participants and decision-making forces in play
- be mindful of the policy community illustrated in Figure 19

*policy communities*: constellations of groups that share common interests in a broad policy domain



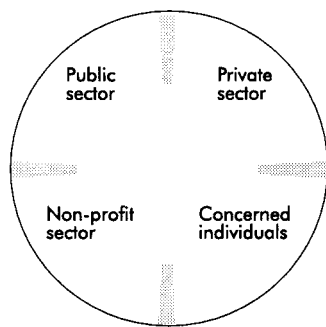
*policy networks*: varying configurations of groups and individuals coalescing around different policy issues (unique analytical capacity)

*configurations*: pressure pluralism, clientele pluralism, state direction, concertation

undertake stakeholder analysis and delineate selection criteria to cover the following elements:

- sector — public, private, not-for-profit, concerned individuals

**FIGURE 20**  
Stakeholder Analysis by Sector



Source: Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy, *Public Consultation Guide* (1994).

- legitimacy
  - numbers, comparative size
  - the proportion of the domain they represent
  - their mandate from constituents to act on their behalf

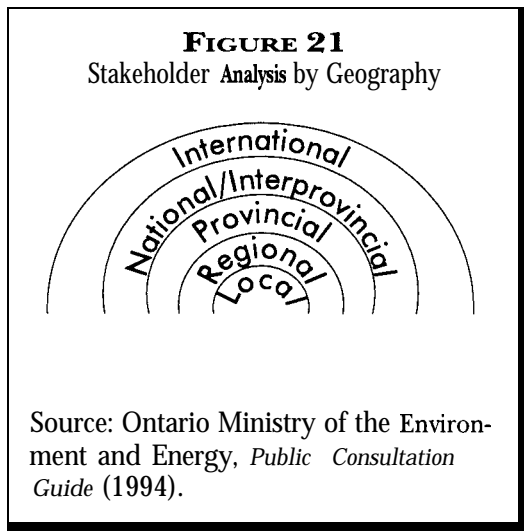
- their internal cohesion/cohesiveness
- their record/outputs to date — communication, services

- resources
  - knowledge of policy substance and process
  - finances
  - physical assets
  - people (paid and volunteer staff)
  - leadership and experience
  - status (with government and other partners)
  - information and research capacity
- policy capacity
  - knowledge and capacity to articulate
  - capacity to synthesize and influence
  - strategic capacity (setting goals and developing means to accomplish goals)
  - capacity to mobilize and form coalitions
- reputation/credibility
  - organization
  - people
  - outputs
  - processes, methods employed
- membership characteristics
  - demographic profile



- o psychographic profile
- organizational structure
  - o structure of the organization
  - o management
  - o influencers
  - o internal committees — structure, composition, mandate
  - o linkages
- where
  - o geography — local, regional, provincial, national, interprovincial, international
  - o travel/meeting implications

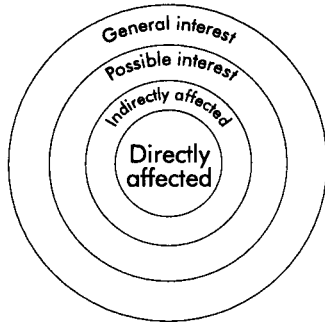
- decision-making process
  - o authorities
  - o understand the decision-making processes of the potential participants and thus be in a position to accommodate their mandates and objectives in setting out the process and ground rules
- interrelationships
  - o internal and external
  - o organizational
  - o positional
  - o interests
  - o personal
  - o potential conflict situations



- financial profile
  - o revenue — level, sources
  - o expenditure distribution
  - o financial stability
  - o autonomy in determining use of financial resources

- commitment
- participation barriers
  - o costs
  - o conflict of interest
  - o political agendas
  - o availability/ timing
- main issues/interests
  - o short term
  - o long term
- extent of impact
  - o impact and interest, stake in the decision
    - directly/indirectly affected
    - possible/general interest.

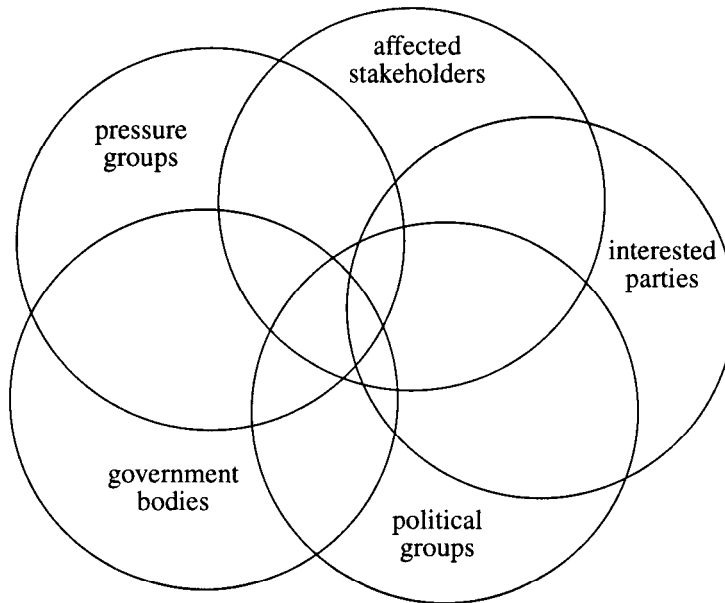
**FIGURE 2 2**  
Stakeholder Analysis by Impact and Interest



Source: Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Energy, *Public Consultation Guide* (1994).

In conducting stakeholder analysis, it is useful to identify common interests shared by stakeholders (see Figure 23) prior to the consultation process and to assess where there will be conflicting positions. This will enable the facilitator to build consensus on some of the easier issues and establish some “successes” early in the process. The identification of such interests may be conducted through meetings or a review of earlier consultation processes, position papers, questionnaires, and other similar approaches.

**FIGURE 2 3**  
Stakeholder Common Interests



Figures 24 and 25 can assist managers/ teams to develop profiles and select stakeholders and/or groups being considered for inclusion in the consultation process.

The Stakeholder Selection Grid (Figure 24) allows the manager to list stakeholders by category (affected, interested, pressure, government,

political) and then to rate each stakeholder according to a set of weighted criteria relevant to the exercise. The “legitimacy” criterion, for example, might include consideration of the numbers represented by a group, the percentage of the policy field represented by the group, its mandate, its ability to make commitments on behalf of the group, and outputs to date.

**FIGURE 24**  
Stakeholder Selection Grid

WHO	LEGITIMACY			RESOURCES					POLICY					CHARACTERISTICS			
	#	%	KNOW	#	ASSET	PEOP	LEAD.	STAT.	RES.	ART.	AGG.	STRA.	MOB.	COAL.	DEM.	PSY.	WEIGHT
Affected		(1-3-5)															
Interested																	
Pressure																	
Government																	
Political																	

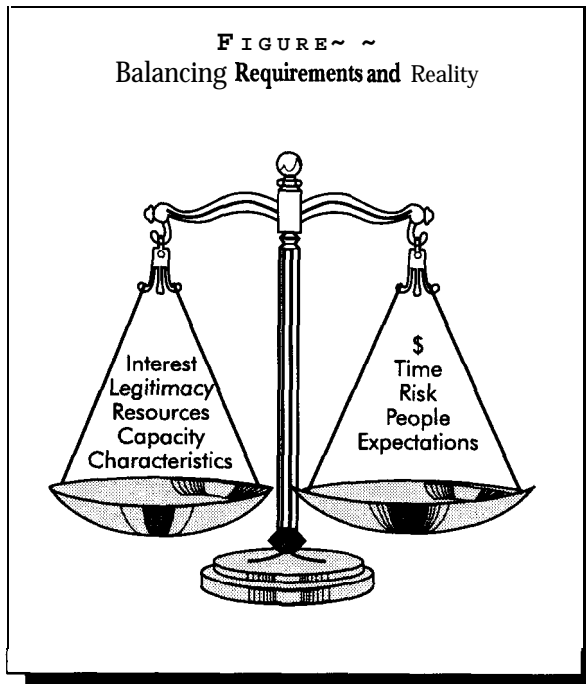
FIGURE 25  
Stakeholder Coalitional Capacity Grid

		Issue / Option								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Stakeholder										
A	(H-M-L)									
B										
C										
D										
E										
F										
G										

H = High                  M = Medium                  L = Low

The Stakeholder Coalitional Capacity Grid (Figure 25) can be helpful in understanding the interests of the various stakeholders, their relative importance, and the likelihood of coalitions (and consensus) being formed during a consultative process.

Stakeholder analysis and selection are often a question of balancing the ideal representation with the realities of budget, time and people constraints. This is sometimes as much an art as it is a science.



*19. Determine communication/  
information exchange requirements*

A communications plan should be developed to support a consultation program. The plan should include key messages about the proposal on which consultation is being undertaken, a description of communication/consultation needs, existing and potential problems raised by the proposal, audiences to be reached, and products to be developed, along with implementation schedules and assignment of responsibility.

*18. Involve the critical groups*

Early in the process, in attempting to gain the interest and involvement of influential stakeholders and those who might be opposed to the proposal on which consultation is planned, the manager might consider establishing a steering committee composed of representatives from the public and private sectors to provide feedback and advice on the content and process of the consultation.

*20. Define roles and responsibilities*

At least three distinct groupings of principals are involved in any consultation:

*1. Public and stakeholders*

- individuals
- interest groups
- other government departments
- other governments
- non-governmental organizations
- media
- other.

*Responsibilities of public and stakeholders:*

- describe self-interests at outset, to find common interest areas
- understand the issues and decisions
- understand each other's internal decision-making process
- develop trust
- represent interests
- be authorized to speak for their constituencies
- seek common ground
- clarify issues and present clear input
- communicate the progress and results of process to groups they represent
- approach consultation with "win-win" mentality
- all have same level of expectations of outcome
- share a strong sense of urgency
- be flexible.

*2. Program manager/coordinator/team*

- those responsible for departmental structure and organization
- program coordinators
- event facilitators
- logistics coordinators
- resource people
- documenters
- information producers and managers
- chairpersons
- translators/interpreters

- others (consultants).

*Responsibilities of program manager/coordinator/team:*

- understand the consultation requirements
- ensure the process is on time, on budget, and consistent with the requirements
- ensure stakeholders/participants are identified and can provide input
- elaborate/coordinate/implement consultation plan
- ensure preparation of discussion papers and other background materials to be used in consultations
- build consensus/agreement among stakeholders
- communicate input to decision makers and ensure that
  - due consideration is given to public input
  - the input is clearly understood by the decision maker
  - the implications of the input for decisions are clear
- provide feedback to stakeholders to maintain the integrity and credibility of the process and ensure that
  - the decisions are made by the decision maker
  - the public consultation influences the decisions made.

3. *Decision makers*

- Prime Minister
- parliamentary committees
- minister
- deputy head and department
- PCO
- Treasury Board
- CCMD.

*Responsibilities of government, minister, department:*

- define the decisions at stake
- identify stakeholder groups
- determine the consultation period
- approve the consultation plan
- consider consultation results when making decisions
- provide feedback, verbal or written, to participants on decisions taken
- the decision document, if prepared, should be distributed to all interested stakeholders and should report what decisions were made and how input influenced decisions
- leadership/champions.

*Responsibilities of PCO, Treasury Board, CCMD:*

- provide broad policy/strategic direction, advice and coordination to government and departments on individual and general consultation strategies/activities
- assess effectiveness of proposed consultation strategies

- work with departments, other central agencies on cross-government consultation issues (e.g., training, intervener funding, evaluation criteria) .

21. *Identify potential and real obstacles*

Obstacles might include some or all of the following:

- scope of exercise
- wide geographic dispersion of stakeholders
- history of confrontational relationships with certain stakeholders
- public mood and attitude toward bureaucrats and politicians
- economic barriers to stakeholder participation.

Once the potential and real obstacles are identified, the challenge is to develop options to remove them or reduce their effect.

22. *Define consultation deliverables*

The consultation manager will want to identify the various products of the consultation process. These might

include some or all of the following, in traditional and/or electronic versions:

- public notices
- information for stakeholders, including discussion papers
- stakeholder response/analysis tools
- press releases
- status reports
- feedback report for decision maker, departmental officials and stakeholders.

### 23. *Define consultation needs*

Needs defined could include the following:

- provide information to the public and to decision makers
- seek input from the public and from decision makers
- discuss the issues
- identify common ground
- build consensus
- resolve issues

- ensure follow-up.

### 24. *Review possible activities, mechanisms and techniques*

Consultation managers/planning teams should understand that

- there are many activities, mechanisms or techniques from which to choose
- there is no single “best” one
- each consultation plan will likely combine more than one
- each activity, mechanism or technique has strengths and weaknesses
- choice will be influenced by some or all of the following considerations:
  - the consultation issue and its urgency
  - the range of stakeholders involved
  - the geographic scope of the consultation
  - the level of consultation required (comment, dialogue, etc.)
  - the decision maker’s desired level/degree of agreement
  - current departmental/organizational needs and circumstances, including the degree of controversy associated with decisions.



Some of the most popular public consultation activities, mechanisms or techniques are as follows (those marked with an asterisk are described further in Appendix A) :

Advisory Board/Committee\*  
 Brainstorming  
 Briefing/Debriefing  
 Call for Briefs/Submissions\*  
 Charrette\*  
 Coffee Klatch  
 Computer-Assisted Participation  
 Conference  
 Delphi Process\*  
 Dialogues  
 Discussion Paper  
 Electronic Conferencing/Highway  
 Focus Group\*  
 Informal Communication  
 Internet  
 Interviews  
 Open House\*  
 Panel  
 Parliamentary Committee  
 Participatory Television  
 Public Hearing\*  
 Public Meeting\*  
 Public Seminar  
 Round Table  
 Royal Commission\*  
 Site Visit  
 Study Circle\*  
 Survey  
 Task Force  
 Toll-Free Telephone Line  
 Workshop\*  
 Written Submission

Some of the techniques have been used recently in public consultations. Appendix A contains selected examples.

### 25. Match activities and needs

It is critical to select consultation activities and techniques that are appropriate for serving the consultation objective(s). The manager may opt for a variety of processes and activities to meet the needs of stakeholders and achieve the desired outcome of consultation.

When choosing activities and techniques, it is essential to keep in mind the consultation objectives, such as

- providing information
- seeking input
- discussing the issues
- identifying common ground
- building consensus
- resolving issues
- ensuring follow-up.

Figure 27 illustrates the matching of possible consultation activities to needs.

FIGURE 27  
Matching Activities to Needs

	<i>Providing Understanding Information</i>	<i>Understanding the Public</i>	<i>Discussing the Issues</i>	<i>Identifying Common Ground</i>	<i>Building Consensus</i>	<i>Ensuring Follow-up</i>
Public Meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Workshop		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Public Advisory/ Liaison Committee		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discussion Paper/ Call for Submission	✓	✓				
Toll-free Number	✓	✓				
Focus Group		✓				
Public Hearing		✓				
Informal Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Other factors to consider in matching activities to consultation needs include the following:

- the technical complexity of the issue
- the profile of stakeholders likely to be consulted
- special needs of particular interest

groups (such as new Canadians, seniors, people with disabilities, under- or unemployed, illiterate, innumerate, allophones)

- the geographic diffusion of the public to be consulted
- consultation already conducted on the issue and its success.

**26. Prepare a budget and resources plan, seek commitment and finalize**

Drafting a budget and resources plan calls for the preparation of the following:

- personnel plan
  - skills and time required
- expense budget for
  - proper notice (development and placement of ads)
  - developing, reproducing and distributing information for stakeholders/participants
  - space and accommodation for participants
  - contracting third-party support (facilitators, logistics coordinators, writers, translators and interpreters)
  - reimbursing stakeholder participation expenses
  - other expenses.

**27. Establish/build the consultation team**

According to Katzenbach and Smith (*The Wisdom of Teams*), “A team is a small group of people (typically fewer than twenty) with complementary skills committed to a common purpose and set of specific performance goals. Its members are committed to working with each other to achieve the team’s purpose and hold each other fully and jointly accountable for the team’s results.”

To establish and run an effective team, the following elements should be addressed:

- mandate
- reporting relationship
- team/group performance skills — technical, process, people.

**28. Determine skills requirements and training needs and train as required**

The required managerial knowledge and skills for effective consultation may include the following:

- understanding public interest and the role of stakeholders
- understanding the role of government and the policy development process
- communications, which include listening, presenting (oral/written), writing, asking, answering, summarizing
- commitment
- documenting
- sharing
- taking action

- following-up
- consensus building
- problem solving
- facilitation and meeting management
- technical and functional skills
- understanding groups and teams
- negotiation and conflict resolution
- interpersonal skills
- managing relationships
- managing information
- media relations
- managing risks
- managing crises
- managing change
- managing time
- evaluating and providing feedback
- planning and implementing
- preparing communication plans.

*29. Schedub detailed activities and techniques*

Scheduling factors include the following:

- the (statutory) notice and comment period
- the geographic scope of the consultation
- the degree of controversy and significance associated with the decision at stake
- the level of consultation
- community-specific conditions (harvest, festivals, day-time workers)
- seasons and holidays
- responsiveness of the system
- audience size.

*30. Prepare agendas*

In addition to a specific activity agenda for all participants, it is advisable to prepare an annotated agenda/script for resource people, facilitators and speakers.

*31. Plan the logistics*

The S.T.E.P.S. model presented earlier (at the beginning of Activity 3) can serve as

a useful guide to logistics planning. Logistics, if done well, enhance the provision of input from stakeholders. If done poorly, logistics can derail the consultation exercise altogether.

### 32. *Prepare for effective inter- and intra-organization communications*

This calls for preparation and approval of a communications strategy and plan.

### 33. *Clarify success criteria*

The manager may wish to consider the following factors in developing success criteria:

- *Influence on decision making*- To what degree did the results of the consultation influence the decision? If not at all or little, those consulted may see their participation as disappointing, which may contribute to cynicism and isolation.
- *Clear feedback on decision* — Consultation managers and decision makers are expected to let those who provided input know what decision has been taken and why, and in a timely manner.
- *Clarity and comprehension of purpose and follow-up* — The more clearly the parties to the consultation understand the purpose of consultation and follow-up, the better their input and commitment to the outcome will be. If stakeholders do not have a clear understanding of why they are being consulted, they may not be in a position to provide information of quality. Furthermore, if stakeholders' understanding of the purpose of consultation differs, the nature, scope and relevance of their input may also vary.
- *Visibility* — Did people know about the consultation? Was the process in public view, whether planned or unplanned?
- *Accessibility* — Was the process accessible and inclusive for all groups and individuals that wanted to be or should have been consulted?
- *Representativeness* — To what extent did participants reflect the segment(s) of society affected by the issue or by the decision at stake?
- *Transparency* — Was the process open or closed?
- *Consultation design and schedule* — Did the design fit the objectives and did the schedule of activities allow for contributions of quality?
- *Information* — How useful was the information obtained from the

consultations? Did the manager give adequate information to facilitate the best possible input?

- *Ideas and intellect* — Were the ideas put forward during the consultations innovative, useful? Did something new come out of the consultation?
- *Cost/benefit* — Was the consultation worth the effort expended?
- *Accountability* — Stakeholders and the public in general increasingly hold decision makers accountable for decisions made following consultations.
- *Expectations* — The expectations of all parties to the consultation — government and stakeholders alike — should be addressed; the earlier in the process expectations are clarified, the greater the likelihood of successful consultation.
- *Objectives* — To what degree were the objectives met?
- *Principles* — To what degree were the principles of effective consultation respected?
- *Impact* — What was the impact of the consultation exercise? on the relationship between government and stakeholders? on the relationships

among stakeholders? of the decision taken or not taken? of stakeholder participation?

### 34. *Identify potential potholes*

There are bound to be some. The process will run more smoothly if potholes can be spotted in advance and avoided.

### 35. *Plan contingencies*

A plan is just that. Once the plan is being implemented, the manager needs to be prepared for the unexpected. Contingency plans should be in place to deal with the unexpected.

### 36. *Communicate, communicate, communicate*

The more open the process, the more comfortable the participants will feel with it and with the outcome. The importance of communicating informally and formally with stakeholders, decision makers, departmental colleagues, media representatives and others throughout the process cannot be underestimated.

### **End of Phase 1**

This is the end of Phase 1. The manager/team has completed most or all of the three activities and 36 steps. The

result of this first phase is a consultation plan, which is usually prepared by the program manager and presented to the decision maker for approval. The consultation plan

- details how to accomplish the tasks of informing and consulting stakeholders, analysing input, reporting back to the decision maker, and providing feedback to stakeholders
- helps in managing the consultation through the various tasks
- helps mark progress and make adjustments as required and as determined by the relevant success factors.

It is also important at this stage to have clearly enunciated terms of reference. Terms of reference for a consultation, usually set by the decision maker, should include the following elements:

- *Background data/information* — The rationale or reason for holding consultations, including information on results and experience of previous consultations.
- *Decisions at stake, including constraints* — All participants should have a clear understanding of which decisions/options are open for consulta-

tion and which are not. In addition, terms of reference should clarify what type of input is required and the duration of the consultation period and the decision-making period.

- *Stakeholder analysis* — Stakeholders may be affected directly or indirectly by a proposal; they may be interested in the proposal or believe that they are affected; or they may be concerned in a general way. The manager should carry out a stakeholder analysis setting out these considerations to facilitate selection of those to be consulted.
- *Deliverables* — The products or deliverables expected from the consultation process (public notices, information for stakeholders, stakeholder response documents, feedback report).
- *Options and activities* — The activities to be undertaken in the consultation, based on consideration of
  - the range of stakeholders
  - the geographic scope of the consultation
  - the purpose of consultation (comment, dialogue, agreement, consensus)
  - the specific needs of the consultation, including the degree of

controversy associated with the decisions at stake.

- *Involvement type* — Public consultation can serve to obtain public input on a decision. Other public involvement types may include
  - participation
  - mediation
  - arbitration.
- *Consultation level* — Determining the appropriate level of consultation depends on the extent of agreement required by the decision maker and by legal and policy requirements. The public can be involved through
  - written comments — notice of a proposal is given, with an opportunity to submit comments within a specified period
  - dialogue — the public is given the opportunity to discuss particular issues in one or more public meetings at specified times and locations
  - agreement — stakeholders are brought together in one or more consultation events to determine levels of agreement and disagreement
  - consensus — stakeholders are brought together in one or more consultation events to develop consensus on issues, options and/or decisions under examination.
- *Consultation objectives* — Consultation objectives must be delineated explicitly by the decision maker. A statement of objectives should specify what is to be accomplished through consultation and should make reference to which decisions are open to consultation and which are not; the range of stakeholders to be involved; and the level of public involvement expected.
- *Resources* — An estimate of the resources required to carry out the consultation program should include plans or information pertaining to
  - personnel (skills and time)
  - budget (information and communication costs, room bookings, third-party contracting, translation/interpretation, and all other costs).
- *Schedule* — Apart from routine considerations about promptness and timeliness, the schedule may be influenced by legislation, regulations, or other factors requiring minimum notice and comment periods for public consultation. These factors should be specified in the terms of reference.



## **PHASE 2**

### **During Consultation**

*(1 activity, 11 steps)*

In Phase 2, the manager/team will be conducting the consultation process — implementing the consultation plan developed by the end of Phase 1.

#### **Activity 4: Implement Plan**

*(11 steps)*

##### *37. Manage logistics*

Assisted by the S.T.E.P.S. model referred to at the beginning of this chapter, the manager executes the plans developed in Phase 1. A key requirement is the ability to adapt to last-minute obstacles and changes. Having contingency plans and back-up options helps the manager meet the challenges of the unexpected.

##### *38. Manage relationships*

This requires the manager to

- get involved in informal relationships, appropriate to the cultures and circumstances affecting the process (these relationships provide alternative methods of communication and facilitate an understanding of the positions of stakeholders)

- pair resources with complementary skills, such as the facilitator or technical expert
- look after him- or herself and encourage others to do likewise — the process can be exciting, consuming and invigorating. Without self-discipline, individuals can find themselves run down, detached from their loved ones, and over-stretched.

##### *39. Manage expectations*

The point has been made repeatedly about the importance of clarifying expectations and making sure they are realistic. This holds for the decision maker as well as stakeholders and the manager/team.

##### *40. Manage media requirements*

Taking the media into account in public consultation planning is a must, given that the public will receive its information about the consultation, public involvement, and the results of the process primarily through media accours. A media relations strategy should include a media relations plan that

- defines objectives
- situates these objectives in the context of corporate communications and other corporate objectives

- identifies target audiences and the channels to be used to reach them
- defines core themes and messages
- identifies and trains spokespersons.

The challenge is to assist, not manipulate, the media. Media coverage may have a direct impact on the consultation process and content. If so, managing media relations effectively will be important to the success of the consultation.

#### *41. Manage data/information*

Regardless of the scope and nature of the consultation plan, the manager will need to

- establish and maintain an effective information management process throughout the consultation; participants also have a role to play in bringing forward useful, quality information
- determine information needs based on the issues, objectives and anticipated results of the consultation
- build flexibility into the information management system to accommodate an evolving process
- organize the information as it is generated (displays, documents,

press releases, technical data, electronic formats)

- assess the nature and scope of the information to determine similarities and differences, gaps and relevance, in order to seek out and organize the specific information needed to work toward consensus
- be objective in interpreting information; avoid personal biases in assessing the value of information to allow the full scope of the issue to be widely understood
- share all information as early as possible with all participants and encourage participants to do the same
- prepare materials in at least the two official languages (the nature of the consultation may require the use of Aboriginal or heritage languages as well) .

#### *42. Manage the issues*

Most public policy issues are multifaceted. It is important to decide at the beginning of the consultation process where attention will be focused. Early definition and focus will influence media and public attention and provide a guiding framework for adjustment as the consultation proceeds.

### 43. *Manage time*

The manager will want to

- appreciate and understand that stakeholder groups will have to communicate with their own constituents and manage their decision-making processes in different ways
- provide ample notice to stakeholders of meetings, workshops, calls for briefs, public meetings, and other points of information
- be aware that emergency situations may arise.

### 44. *Manage facilitation*

Facilitation occurs when a group member advances the group toward one of the following goals:

- Developing or refining a structure and/or process that promotes achievement of the meeting's desired outcome (s).
- Making certain that information and data are shared, understood and processed in an open, participatory environment.
- Removing internal blockages hindering the accomplishment of the meeting's desired outcome (s).

There are several roles that individuals may play:

- primary facilitator — manages the process
- secondary facilitator — assists primary facilitator
- timekeeper — manages time allocation
- note-taker/scribe — often works with flip-charts
- rapporteur — keeps formal records.

The role of the primary facilitator includes the following activities:

- Design and organize the physical setting — room selection and set-up, assigned or unassigned seating, ventilation, wall space, lighting, equipment and materials (projectors, flip-charts, markers, tape).
- Design the agenda, with breaks and refreshments as appropriate; at the outset, seek acceptance/buy-in from the group.
- Focus the energies of the group on defining and accomplishing commonly desired outcomes — identify the task.

- Take primary responsibility for establishing a supportive atmosphere —lead the group to establish procedures to that end.
- Be a manager of the process rather than an advocate of specific views.
- Use a variety of meeting techniques as necessary, including brainstorming, nominal group processes, flip-charts.
- Consider rotating the role of facilitator depending on the length of meeting and the degree of empowerment.

The facilitator will

- Help the group use efficient communication processes.
- Encourage exploration.
- Listen to group members. This involves
  - controlling dominating member(s)
  - dealing with disruptive behaviour.
- Build energy quickly and maintain it. In doing so,
  - be aware of natural body language
  - employ idea-getting strategies
  - vary the pace of the meeting
  - allow a place for humour, surprise
  - plan for low energy after meals and later in the program (later in the afternoon in the case of a day-long meeting).

- Be assertive as required to protect the progress of the meeting.
- Seek permission of the group as required (to deviate from the agenda, to become advocate rather than facilitator) .

#### 45. *Manage negotiation*

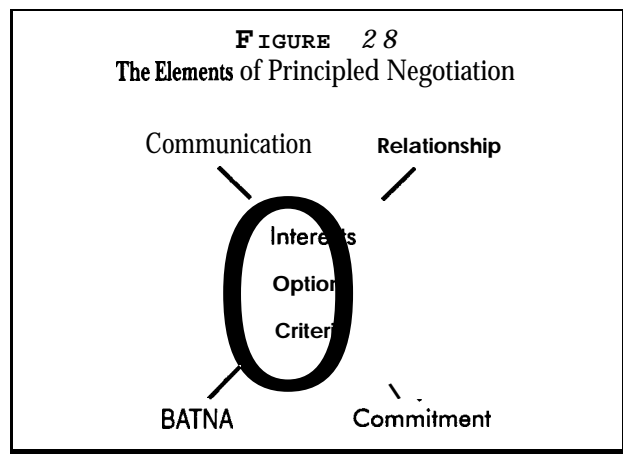
A consultation is not a negotiation, but negotiation dynamics do affect most consultation processes. As stakeholders attempt to make their views known and influence decision makers, consultation can take on aspects of a multi-party negotiation. The challenge for managers is to have stakeholders enter the process still open to ideas and suggestions, not by holding fixed positions. To achieve the desired outcome, direct attention to the following elements of negotiation:

- Keep an eye on participants for signs of boredom, lack of attachment.
- Gauge group chemistry.
- *Interests* — Focus on real underlying interests and motivating factors rather than stated positions of

stakeholders. Often several sets of interests are in play.

- *Options* — Develop as many creative options as possible. Often what appears to be a zero-sum game is not. Try to expand the pie rather than simply divide it.
  - *Criteria* — Use standards or objective criteria to determine the legitimacy or fairness of any particular option. Consensus can be achieved more easily if previously agreed objective criteria are used to review options.
  - *Alternatives* — All participants should know what their alternatives are if agreement/consensus is not reached. Agreement is more likely when the option(s) under consideration is (are) better than no agreement. Knowing your best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA)
- and that of your negotiating partner (s) adds a degree of security to your negotiating power.
  - *Commitment* — Commitment can be secured only when the basic interests of all stakeholders are served. Usually, commitment should be made only when all issues have been discussed. It should be well planned, realistic and operational.
  - *Communication* — Communication should be open and effective. There should be a balance of advocacy and inquiry.
  - *Relationship* — Separate the people from the problem, and deal with each problem/issue on its own merits.

All these elements are interrelated, as reflected in Figure 28.



46. *Manage consensus processes*

People often assume that consensus is the goal of consultation. This is not always the case. Consultation can have many goals. Consensus may be one.

Consensus means different things to different people. Before moving too far into the consultation process, it is useful to ask those who have consensus as a goal to define what they mean by consensus.

- Does consensus mean 100 percent agreement
  - from all participants?
  - from 51 percent of participants?
- Is it where all participants are willing to live with the total package?

The next important step is to consider how to achieve or build consensus. Experience has shown that such a process

- should not require stakeholders/ participants to make unreasonable concessions
- changes the choice each stakeholder/participant has to make, to one that facilitates useful communication

- reduces the risks associated with stakeholders revealing their interests and concerns
- reduces the risks of being creative, particularly in a consultation whose objective is to look for options.

The one-text procedure — a single text drafted from the perspective of stakeholders' interests — is a workable tool. The one-text procedure is described in *Getting to Yes* (Fisher, Ury, Patton, 1991). It

- is a systematic, third-party-assisted approach to building agreements that are durable and meet the interests of stakeholders
- permits consultations to shift away from concession making
- simplifies multi-stakeholder decision making
- helps to improve and rebuild working relationships among stakeholders, so that they all feel heard, respected and understood.

The single text serves as the focal point for eliciting interests and generating and refining options. Typically, a third party takes responsibility for developing the single text; alternatively, the single text

might be drafted just as effectively by a joint team or by alternating responsibility for the drafting among key stakeholders.

For effective drafting of the single text, the following steps are recommended:

- Be explicit with the parties about the process — your role, theirs, how you intend to proceed.
- Listen to the views of the parties.
- Explore underlying interests — move away from positions and move toward why the parties hold these positions — and possible options for solving the impasse.
- Create a draft single text — a rough draft of an agreement that addresses the interests of the parties, that is not operational and that has evident gaps.
- Ask for criticism — ask why the draft does not work as a means of exploring the parties' interests further.
- Keep a master copy of the text — do not distribute it to participants for their commitments or approvals.
- Prepare the second draft in light of what you learned and repeat the

process, asking for criticism and preparing another draft until you cannot improve the text further.

- Finalize the text to the point where you will not make any further changes.
- Present the final draft and ask, do you accept this agreement? Clarify the consequences of each choice. If participants agree, proceed to implementation; if not, you and the parties go back to the beginning.

#### *47. Communicate, communicate, communicate*

The more open the process, the more comfortable most participants will feel with it and the outcome. The importance of communicating informally and formally with stakeholders, decision makers, departmental colleagues, media representatives and others throughout the process cannot be underestimated.

#### **End** of Phase 2

This is the end of Phase 2. The manager/team has implemented the consultation plan developed in Phase 1, and information has been gathered from participants.

## PHASE 3 After Consultation

*(2 activities, 4 steps)*

Consultation does not end with the gathering of information. In fact, what is done with the information after the consultation is critical to the decision-making process for which the consultation was undertaken. In Phase 3, the manager undertakes two activities and completes the four final steps of the process.

### **Activity 5: Report** *(3 steps)*

#### *48. Assess data/information*

Data and information assessment will depend in part on how information was obtained and managed during consultations and on the quality of stakeholders' contributions. The objectives of the consultation will have a strong bearing on the assessment.

#### *49. Report findings/recommendations to decision maker*

The consultation manager reports the outcome of the consultation to the decision maker. In communicating the

outcome to the decision maker, the manager will want to ensure that

- due consideration is given to stakeholder contributions
- all elements of the outcome are clearly understood by the decision maker
- the implications of stakeholder contributions for the decisions at stake are clear.

If there is a summary document on consultation results, it should include the following elements:

- background
- purpose
- process
- participants
- findings, results
  - themes raised
  - trends and strength of opinions
- agreement, consensus, dissension
- language and tone used by participants.



### 50. *Feedback to stakeholders and participants*

Sound consultation practice requires feedback processes to tell the manager how stakeholders reacted to the consultation process and let stakeholders know how their input was used. The manager should inform participants of the decisions taken and the rationale for them and follow up on other consultation matters as needed. In brief, the manager should

- provide feedback to stakeholders to maintain the integrity and credibility of the consultation and ensure that
  - decisions are made by the decision maker
  - the influence of the consultation on the decisions is considered
- provide feedback, verbal or written, to participants on decisions taken. The decision document, if prepared, should be distributed to all stakeholders and should report on how decisions were made and how input affected decisions.

### **Activity 6: Evaluate** (1 step)

#### 51. *Evaluate process and outcome*

Evaluation should be considered early in the design stage, not just at the end of the process. In fact, as the consultation project proceeds, the manager should

- evaluate the project regularly and adjust it as needed (for example, target dates and deadlines may need to be adjusted to reflect stakeholder realities)
- use established success criteria to evaluate performance
- evaluate the process at the end to identify strengths and weaknesses so that the lessons learned can be used to shape future consultations and incorporated into departmental/governmental memory
- evaluate the level of satisfaction of participants with the process and the results achieved; provide participants with feedback on the evaluation
- recognize and underline participants' contributions at all phases of the consultation process

Evaluations can be carried out in various ways, including

- *Questionnaires* — directed to stakeholders involved in the consultation to obtain their general views and perceptions
- *Interviews* — with consultation participants and officials charged with using the information for policy and program development
- *Focus groups* — with small groups of stakeholders to obtain in-depth feedback and information concerning specific aspects of the consultation process
- *Stakeholder panels* — continuing feedback to determine shifts in perceptions in the case of longer-term consultations
- *Media scans* — to capture media views concerning the success of the initiative
- *Audit* — formal, independent review of costs and benefits in relation to initial objectives and cost estimates
- *Correspondence scans* — reviews of letters to the minister, deputy minister and others, to get a sense of correspondents' identity and views on the consultation

Responses to the following questions may be useful in evaluating consultations:

#### *Planning*

- Was the consultation purpose-driven? Was there a clear reason for people to participate? Was it clear to the department?
- Was the decision to consult a first thought rather than an afterthought?
- Was financial assistance made available to assure the participation of stakeholders with inadequate resources?
- Were parameters established at the outset? Were the agenda and the consultation process negotiable?
- Did the parties assist with the design of the consultation process?
- Was the outcome determined beforehand?
- Was there a clear understanding of the expectations of all parties?
- Was it consistent with the government's political imperatives?
- Were key players trained in the skills required for effective consultation?

- Were other government departments (and provinces and municipalities) with an interest in this area consulted? Was there agreement on the approach? Did the federal government speak with one voice?

*Process*

- Was a stakeholder analysis conducted to ensure that the appropriate participants were selected?
- Were the mandates of participants clear?
- Was everyone's role in the process clear?
- Did affected or interested parties participate voluntarily?
- Were all parties who could contribute to or who were affected by the results of the consultation involved? Was it inclusive rather than exclusive? Was the size of the group manageable?
- Was there mutual respect for the perspectives of all participants and their legitimacy?
- Was there acceptance of the diverse values, interests and knowledge of the parties involved?

- Was the process flexible?
- Was there enough time to conduct the consultations properly? Were there realistic deadlines?
- Were the values of openness, honesty, trust and transparency evident and upheld?
- Were independent, neutral facilitators used when necessary?
- Did the process build on lessons from previous public consultations? Was this communicated within the department?
- Was information readily shared? Were discussion papers distributed ahead of time?
- Was feedback solicited from participants throughout the process? Was it acted upon?

*Outcome*

- Did the consultation produce credible information useful to decision makers?
- Was an information management plan in place to handle and provide for objective analysis of the information received?

- Was there a sense of shared ownership of the process and the outcome?
- Was stakeholders'/parties' mutual understanding enhanced?
- Was there a commitment to implement and monitor the outcome of the consultations?
- Was a public consultation the best way to get the results obtained?

*Follow-up*

- Was feedback provided to stakeholders on the impact of their contribution?
- Was there follow-up?



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# Afterword

**T**HIS GUIDE IS OFFERED TO PUBLIC service managers to assist in meeting the challenges of conducting public consultation. It is a roadmap for managing effective public consultation. As the terrain changes over time, so will the map. You are invited to forward your views, comments and suggestions for changes to

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# Appendix A

## ACTIVITIES

**T**HIS APPENDIX DESCRIBES A VARIETY OF selected activities, techniques, and mechanisms available for conducting public consultation (a list of techniques and mechanisms appeared in Chapter 4, step 24).

The techniques, mechanisms and activities appropriate for a particular public consultation will vary with the issue, characteristics of the stakeholders (education, experience, level of concern), technology, time available to reach a decision, and other variables. Some of the techniques described in the following pages have been used in actual public consultations, and these examples are noted in the descriptions.

### ■ Advisory or Liaison Committee, Board or Council

**What it is:** a group of representatives from a particular community or set of interests, appointed or selected to

provide comments and advice on an issue.

**When it is used:** can be a useful public consultation vehicle for

- directing the planning and implementation of a project or policy
- organizing and coordinating the involvement and input of a wide range of people
- developing consensus for action on complex issues that touch many parts of the community
- enabling frequent contact between the community and the consulting agency or the agency sponsoring the consultation
- encouraging the sharing of information and the negotiating of strategies and solutions



- helping to set priorities
- developing alternatives
- selecting consultants
- reviewing written material before release to the public
- hosting and participating in public meetings and conferences
- providing a sounding board to adequately reflect public opinion
- providing two-way communication with a number of interested parties
- gaining the expertise and input of a number of interested groups
- reviewing technical data or other material and making recommendations regarding proposals, decision-making processes, budgets
- assisting in educating the public
- resolving conflict between groups.

***Special considerations:*** selection of participants can be carried out by

- the consulting agency
- groups asked by the consulting agency to select a representative

- a third party
- a call for volunteers from one or all of the above.

An advisory committee and its membership are selected to represent a cross-section of interests. Guard against appointing members because of their political affiliation rather than their technical expertise.

***Guidelines for effectiveness:***

- Ensure that the full range of interests and values is represented by the membership.
- Define the committee's mandate and terms of reference; the duration of the committee and the frequency and locations of meetings should be specified and limited to the scope of the task.
- Clarify the committee's role in decision making.
- Provide ample time for members to maintain communication with their constituencies to ensure they adequately represent the view of their organizations.
- With the committee, establish procedures, decision-making processes, attendance requirements (alternates?),

and guidelines for the participation of observer-s or alternates, confidentiality and reimbursement of expenses.

- Ensure a commitment of adequate professional staff, taking into account the amount of time needed to arrange meetings, write minutes and follow-up reports, tend to administrative details, and other practical concerns.

***Examples from actual public consultation:***

- Consultations on Amendments to the *Competition Act*, 1995-1996
- Information Highway Advisory Council, 1994/1997.

## ■ Calls for Briefs/Submissions

***What it is:*** an invitation to the public to address a project or policy idea by formulating alternative and creative solutions and submitting these in a formal presentation. A call for submissions may be preliminary to further consultation or other activity with public involvement.

***When it is used:*** can be a useful public consultation vehicle to

- receive input at any stage of the

planning and decision-making process

- receive carefully researched and well-considered positions
- supplement less formal consultation techniques.

***Special considerations:*** Background information must be gathered in the preparation of the call for briefs and communicated in the call.

Submissions will need to be collected, collated and analysed — it will be necessary to assign personnel to these functions.

There is a likelihood that responses may be limited to interest groups. Moreover, when you put out a call for submissions, adequate information must be provided to ensure the fullest response.

***Guidelines for effectiveness:***

- In launching the call, allow sufficient time for people to carry out their research and write a brief.
- Make sure that necessary information is made available to the writers of the brief.
- Acknowledge receipt of briefs in a timely manner.

- Compile a summary of the main points contained in the briefs.
- Make all briefs available electronically and/or at a convenient viewing centre.
- Prepare a formal paper to show how the briefs will be used.
- Advise all submitters of the outcome of the process.

**Examples from actual public consultations:**

- Amendments to the *Competition Act*, 1995
- Social Security Review, 1994/1995
- Budget consultations, yearly.

■ Charrette\*

**What it is:** a problem-solving workshop that brings together all interest groups, however diverse their opinions. (See

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\*From the French phrase *en charrette*, “in a cart.” It is suggested in *Terminium* (Government of Canada Linguistic Data Bank, 1996) that the current use of the term (to describe an intensive deadline-oriented group confrontation and discussion technique for problem solving) might be an allusion to the practice of French architecture students to work hastily on their design drawings in the carts which took them to school.

Workshops, later in this Appendix, for additional pointers.)

**When it is used:** can be a useful public consultation vehicle

- when opinion is very diverse
- when all parties are committed to resolve differences and establish a plan acceptable to all
- when agreement is needed in a relatively short time
- to resolve an impasse among groups
- to allow participants to gain a better understanding of the positions held by other groups and to promote the development of teamwork and cooperation among groups previously in conflict.

**Special considerations:** The goal of a charrette is to achieve consensus or agreement on an overall plan. A charrette is often scheduled for a week-end or a series of daytime or evening meetings — compared to a focus group (see section on Focus Groups) it can be a long process. Often it is planned as a retreat.

**Guidelines for effectiveness:**

- Ensure that all parties, including

government, are willing to participate and are committed to resolving differences and determining an appropriate plan that is acceptable to all.

- Make certain that all parties, including government, are willing to accept the resulting plan.
- Make sure at the outset that all parties have the time to participate in the full process — it can be time-consuming. To be successful, all parties must be present and prepared to remain in the meeting until a satisfactory plan is reached.
- these responses are collected and a statistical summary is prepared
- the summary is distributed to participants, who are asked to give a new estimate
- in certain circumstances, participants are asked to explain their estimates
- after several rounds, participants are asked for a final estimate, and a final summary is prepared.

*When it is used:* can be a useful public consultation technique to achieve consensus on forecasts among a group of experts.

## ■ Delphi Process

*What it is:* a technique for obtaining and sharing experts' **judgments**, speculations and forecasts on a particular issue, which proceeds as follows:

- a questionnaire is distributed to all participants, who are asked to indicate their forecasts concerning the issue under examination
- responses are consolidated and a list of forecasts is prepared
- the list is distributed to participants, who are asked to estimate the likelihood of each event
- *Special considerations:* The process, which is time-consuming and cumbersome, presents real challenges, including these:
  - participants must be familiar with and dedicated to the process; they may change their thinking and adopt the prevailing view
  - the process precludes face-to-face interaction
  - the process excludes the general public; consensus, if achieved, is shared among experts only.

**Guideline for effectiveness:**

- Ensure that skilled, professional staff are assigned to design questionnaires, collect and analyse the results and work with participants on process issues.

## ■ Discussion Paper

**Examples from actual public consultations:**

- Social Security Review, 1994
- Budget consultations, yearly
- Settlement Renewal, Citizenship and Immigration, 1995-1996.

## ■ Focus Group

**What it is:** a gathering of eight to ten individuals with a strong interest in the public consultation issue or goal and who represent a cross-section of the public affected by this issue. Participants are often chosen to represent specific interests.

**When it is used:** a highly specialized technique that can be a useful public consultation vehicle to

- gauge the nature and intensity of stakeholders' concerns and values about the issues

- obtain a snapshot of public opinion, when time constraints or finances do not allow a full review or survey
- obtain input from individuals as well as interest groups
- obtain detailed reaction and input from a stakeholder or client group to preliminary proposals or options
- collect information on the needs of stakeholders surrounding a particular issue or concept
- determine what additional information or modification may be needed to develop consultation issues or proposals further

**Special considerations:** A focus group is not

- effective for providing information to the general public
- a forum open to responding to general questions
- a vehicle used to seek or build consensus or make decisions.

It can be used in conjunction with several other consultation mechanisms/ techniques.

**Guidelines for effectiveness:**

- Secure skilled personnel to identify and moderate/lead focus groups.

**Examples from actual public consultations:**

- Revenue Canada, testing of Employers' Guide, pensions publications, and Advanced Rulings and Standardized Accounting
- Human Resources Development Canada, Employment Insurance, Reform Measures, 1995-1996.

## ■ Open House

**What it is:** a relatively informal event that enables people to drop in and obtain information at their convenience. Generally includes handouts, a display presentation, and staff to answer questions.

When **it is used:** Can be a useful public consultation vehicle

- as a lead-in for another public consultation activity (see Public Meeting, discussed below, or special event)
- as a follow-up to previous public consultation activities (public meeting or discussion paper)

- when early input on a project or policy is desirable
- for potential projects or policies with great local impact
- to attract a greater number and diversity of people than is possible through public meetings
- as an "idea fair," by inviting special interest groups to set up booths.

**Special considerations:** There are three key factors to consider when planning an open house:

- location — to enhance participation and effectiveness, it should be held in places that are neutral and accessible to the people most affected by the proposed project or policy. This might be a community centre or hall, library, church. The actual room/space should be the right size (not too large or too small) to accommodate the expected number of people, which can be difficult to forecast.
- advertising/publicity — to suit the target community
- staff — to interact with and respond to visitors' questions.

**Guidelines for effectiveness:**

- Plan the duration of the open house to accommodate all interested parties, including seniors, working parents, students, shift workers.
- Design the appropriate display(s) for the target audience — audio-visual, electronic, interactive.
- Avoid the use of highly polished graphics and visual aids. Convey the message that public input is timely, needed and genuinely sought.
- Train staff to answer questions and provide clarification and refer to other authorities.
- Prepare user-friendly information handouts and structured data-gathering and analytic tools.

**Examples from actual public consultations:**

- National Capital Commission, Champlain Bridge project
- Defence White Paper, 1994.

## ■ Policy Colloquium

**Examples from actual public consultations:**

- Social Security Review, on Child Poverty, Life-long Learning and the

World of Work, and Post-Secondary Education, 1994.

## ■ Public Hearing

**What it is:** a structured public meeting (see Public Meeting, discussed below) at which the public can make formal statements about the issue under examination. A panel of representatives from the consultation sponsor (and possibly other key players with a stake in the issue) is established and chaired by a neutral party. Oral statements often precede formal, written submissions to the panel. Generally, there is no opportunity for dialogue between stakeholders.

**When it is used:** a useful public consultation vehicle

- when the issues at stake are controversial and consensus among stakeholders unlikely
- when the sponsor wants to gather diverse input formally to eliminate or decrease the possibility of conflict that could ensue if a less formal process is used
- to restore or build confidence in the decision-making process through a highly visible form of public involvement.

**Special considerations:** Most people who attend public hearings do not speak. This may be the result of time constraints or because individuals are concerned that participation might jeopardize their employment or position in the community.

In addition, it is important to keep in mind

- the degree of controversy about the issue at stake
- that powerful or emotional speakers may sway audience opinion and polarize participating interest groups
- that a significant investment of time and resources is required
- that the public may not have sufficient information to participate effectively
- that there may be barriers to participation, including time and financial constraints and distance.

**Guidelines for effectiveness:**

- See Public Meeting, below.

## ■ Public Meeting

**What it is:** a forum where the consulting team makes a formal presentation to the

public and the public is given the opportunity to respond with questions, reactions and comments.

There are several possible formats for public meetings, depending on the issue, the size of the expected audience, and the desired and anticipated level of interaction with and among participants. Formats include the following:

- briefing followed by questions and answers
- town-hall meeting
- panel/round table
- large group/small group.

**When it is used:** can be a useful public consultation vehicle

- as an information-sharing activity
- as a forum
  - to air concerns
  - to seek views and preferences
  - to present problems needing community consideration
- for giving all stakeholders an opportunity to hear from each other first-hand and to seek general agreement on ways of dealing with an issue
- to convey information directly and personally to a large population.



**Special considerations:** not a useful vehicle for making good decisions or for dealing with complex problems. In addition, there are real process challenges, including

- complex logistics
- unpredictable dynamics because little control can be exercised over participants
- the potential participation of angry people, non-constructive special interest groups, or individuals who monopolize the meeting
- a potentially inexperienced public, who may be afraid to speak in front of large groups and will not speak out
- potentially valuable information not transmitted
- people raise issues unrelated to the issue at hand
- resistance from local community leaders.

There is a high risk of failure, as the consulting team has only one chance to do things right.

**Guidelines for effectiveness:**

- Have a neutral party chair the meeting.
- Establish an agenda, display it and follow it.
- Select appropriate format, according to audience factors, including
  - audience size
  - intensity of public interest
  - familiarity with meeting format
  - your organization's credibility.
- Choose room set-up and seating arrangements carefully; they should reflect the type of meeting, the size of the group expected, the size and function of the room.

## ■ Royal Commission

**What it is:** a public inquiry with the following attributes:

- led by one or more independent commissioners
- has an official mandate and objectives
- has a separate budget and administration process
- generally has powers under the *Inquiries Act*

- can include several consultation techniques
- often uses expertise of lawyers
- usually commissions its own research.

**When it is used:** a useful public consultation vehicle

- for an issue of fundamental importance such as a major policy or legislation
- when there is a high level of dissatisfaction and little agreement around an issue
- when trust of government officials is lacking
- when there is strong ministerial and departmental support for change
- when the value conflict underlying an issue appears incapable of resolution
- because its work is independent of politicians and bureaucrats
- because its outcome is generally taken seriously by the public; this raises the stakes for departments, politicians and participants alike

- because it creates expectations; this often contributes to better quality information and analysis
- because it provides an opportunity for considerable interest group input; as a result, if consensus does occur, it will be strong.

**Guidelines for effectiveness:** Major challenges include the following:\*

- understanding the roles of the commission, commissioners, chair, staff, and others involved
- planning the work — deciding what needs to be done and how best to do it
- managing and adapting the work
- deciding what to recommend
- writing and publishing reports
- facilitating group effectiveness.

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\*Janet R. Smith and R. Anne Patterson, *Managing a Royal Commission, A Planning and Organization Model Derived from the Experience of the Royal Commission on National Passenger Transportation* (Canadian Centre for Management Development, October 1994).

In addition, the following organizational considerations also apply:

- Be specific with the mandate and actual question under examination. Keep the mandate broad enough to catch all client concerns; keep the actual questions specific and narrow in scope, to prevent problems of interpretation throughout the life of the royal commission.
- Beware of being taken over by legalities.
- Avoid providing a showcase for inappropriate individual conduct.
- Establish the commission in two phases:
  1. initial consultation to determine the commission's scope, mandate and procedures
  2. formal plan addressing
    - participants
    - timing and procedures
    - budget
    - administrative control
    - deliverables, such as reports, research papers, press releases
    - communication needs — information/education
    - relationships — public, media, decision makers

- Monitor the process and adjust as you go along; exert quality and process control throughout.

Among the key lessons learned about running an organization capable of supporting the work of a royal commission, in particular establishing and coordinating the work of the staff, are the following:\*

1. Clarify the roles of the chair and the executive director, then respect the roles without exception.
2. Decide early whether the situation calls for a large, expanding organization or a small, flexible one; then manage the choice strictly.
3. Hire only people who really want to be there.
4. Make internal communications and decision making easy and quick.
5. Make the physical premises conducive to getting the work done.
6. Pay attention to detail. It shows, and it pays off!

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\*Smith and Patterson, *Managing a Royal Commission*.

7. Every quarter, think about when the next major shift of phases will occur, and begin planning for the organizational implications.
8. Small organizations can communicate well about both positive and not-so-positive subjects. Manage and provide information consistently and nip problems in the bud.
9. Do not underestimate the time, skill, effort and resources required to publish major reports.
10. It is never too early to think about the winding-down phase. Make the organizational decisions and announce them to allow people plenty of time to make a transition. Tell them early and tell them straight.
11. Laugh at yourself from time to time and help others relax enough to laugh at themselves.

## ■ Study Circle

**What it is:** a well-tested, practical and effective method for adult learning and social change; it is small-group democracy in action — voluntary, informal and highly participatory.

**When it is used:** to assist participants in confronting challenging issues and in

making difficult choices. It engages citizens in public and organizational concerns, bringing the wisdom of ordinary people to bear on difficult issues. It is a useful public consultation vehicle because it represents a valuable training opportunity that can improve participants' ability to advance the organization's interests and may increase their commitment to the organization.

**Special considerations:** The study circle belongs to the participants: individual members ultimately set the agenda and control the content of the discussions. Process is as important as content.

In a study circle, five to twenty people meet several times to discuss choices society or organizations might make concerning a social, political or public policy issue. Each discussion lasts about two hours and is directed by a well-prepared leader, who stimulates and moderates the discussion and guides the group toward the agreed goals. About an hour's worth of reading material covering the issue under examination is sent to participants who have been recruited or self-selected. Cooperation and participation are key elements of the study circle.

The goal of a study circle is not to impart enough facts to make the participants into experts, but rather to deepen their understanding. Common ground is

sought among a variety of viewpoints; consensus and compromise are not necessary.

***Guidelines for effectiveness:***

- The ideal study circle meets once a week for at least three sessions and rarely for more than five or six.
- The organizer and leader are central to the creation and success of a study circle.
- The strength of the study circle is its flexibility and adaptability.

***Examples from actual public consultations:***

- Immigration Policy Review, 1994
- National Forum on Health, 1995-1996.

■ **Workbook**

***Examples from actual public consultations:***

- Budget consultations, 1995
- Social Security Review, 1994
- Immigration Policy Review, 1994
- National Forum on Health, 1995.

■ **Working Group**

***Example from actual public consultations:***

- Information Highway Advisory Council, 1994/1995.

■ **Workshop**

***What it is:*** The goal is to solve problems and build consensus for action. Normally participants are selected to achieve a cross-section of views in a relatively small group (although a workshop can be open or by invitation). The optimum size for maximum effectiveness is five to seven people, but most meetings run to 20 to 25 people for cost and logistical reasons. The facilitator is responsible for structured discussions, animation of the participants and articulation of results.

***When it is used:*** a useful public consultation vehicle for

- defining/examining/discussing issues; formulating alternatives; making recommendations; building consensus or arriving at workable compromises; reviewing information or programs and plans already in place; solving problems; developing creative options; planning reviews
- understanding the public, educating participants, and producing results

- enabling people with a variety of views on an issue to work together to resolve it
- allowing individuals not connected to a specific group to express their viewpoints
- developing participation skills and subject knowledge in those who are to participate in the decision-making process
- establishing dialogue among groups with several opposing viewpoints
- correcting misunderstandings and helping the public become fully aware of the general constraints imposed on the situation and understand the trade-offs
- dealing with complex topics requiring technical information and time for careful consideration
- planning a consultation program.

***Special considerations:*** Organizing and running a workshop require a substantial commitment of time and money for the consultation manager and participants. Be prepared!

***Guidelines for effectiveness:***

- Be sure to identify the desired outcome, result, or product at the design stage; set workshop goals and objectives.
- Use an experienced workshop facilitator with good interpersonal skills, presentation skills, and creative ideas to maximize discussion and option generation.
- Select participants carefully; have a good mix and cross-section of public opinion; the number of participants should not exceed 25 to 30.
- Watch for undue influence of interest groups, particularly if the workshop is repeated in several locales or on different dates.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of facilitator, coordinator and other resource people such as rapporteurs, scribes, presenters.
- Identify workshop deliverables, including agenda, handouts and background reading material, script for chair/facilitator, report, etc.
- Have resource personnel on hand to answer questions of fact.

- Have qualified scribes or rapporteurs on hand.
- Be prepared to evaluate the workshop from several perspectives.

*Example from actual public consultations:*

- Environment Canada, Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment.

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# Appendix B

## CHECKLIST

*A checklist for planning a consultation process based on the roadmap model (see Chapter 4).*

### A PROCESS FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION : THE ROADMAP

#### Phase 1: Before Consultation

##### *Activity 1: Look Inside*

1. review/scan/analyse the environment
2. situate the consultation exercise
3. analyse the situation: determine other special characteristics of the situation
4. identify the relevant statutes or programs for the issue at stake
5. identify the department's decision-making process
6. learn from experience

##### *Activity 2: Look Outside*

7. review/scan/analyse the environment

8. situate the consultation exercise
9. analyse the situation: determine other special characteristics of the situation
10. learn from experience
11. determine the level of public interest and appropriate consultation level

##### *Activity 3: Plan/Get Ready*

12. determine the issues or decisions at stake and their importance
13. hold pre-consultation meeting
14. set goals/objectives
15. determine the consultation period
16. clarify mandate and timeframe
17. identify the key players



18. involve the critical groups
19. determine communication/information exchange requirements
20. define roles and responsibilities
21. identify potential and real obstacles
22. define consultation deliverables
23. define consultation needs
24. review possible activities, mechanisms and techniques
25. match activities and needs
26. prepare a budget and resources plan — seek commitment and finalize
27. establish/build the consultation team
28. determine skills requirements and training needs and train as required
29. schedule detailed activities and techniques
30. prepare agendas
31. plan the logistics
32. prepare for effective communications — inter- and intra-organization
33. clarify success criteria
34. identify potential potholes
35. plan contingencies
36. communicate, communicate, communicate

## Phase 2: **During** Consultation

### *Activity 4: Implement Plan*

37. manage logistics
38. manage relationships
39. manage expectations
40. manage media requirements
41. manage data/information
42. manage the issues
43. manage time
44. manage facilitation
45. manage negotiation
46. manage consensus processes
47. communicate, communicate, communicate

## Phase 3: After Consultation

### *Activity 5: Report*

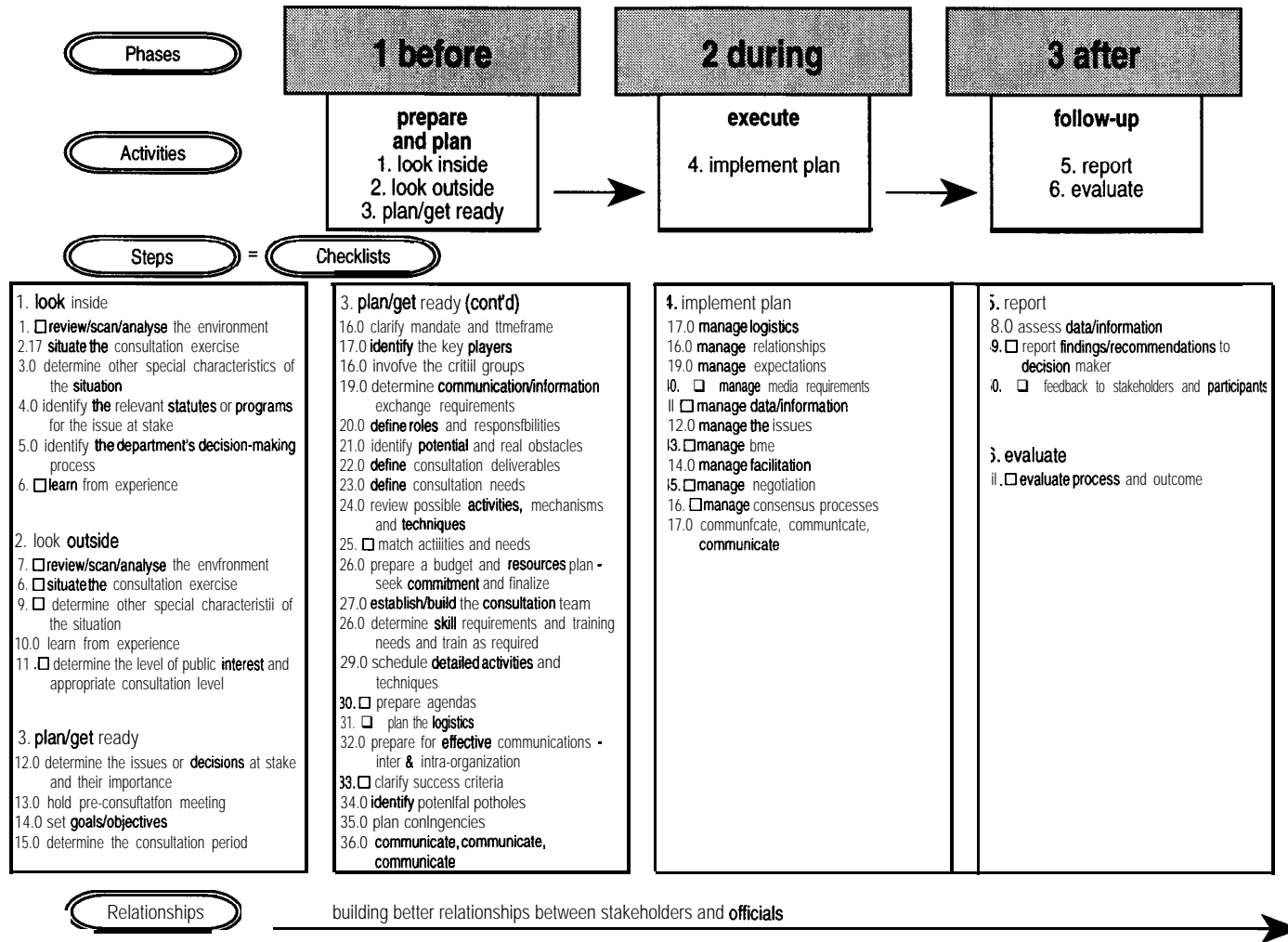
48. assess data/information
49. report findings/recommendations to decision maker
50. feedback to stakeholders and participants

### *Activity 6: Evaluate*

51. evaluate process and outcome.

**FIGURE 29**

**A Process Framework for Public Consultation: The Roadmap**





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---

# List of Figures

1.	Building Effective Consultations .....	7
2.	Organizational Culture and Consultation Design.. .....	10
3.	Relationship Between Organizational Culture and Consultation Design .....	11
4.	Mission and Principles.....	14
5.	Four Frameworks for Consultation .....	17
6.	A Conceptual Framework for Public Consultation: The 4-P Pyramid .....	19
7.	A Strategic Framework for Public Consultation: The Topography.. .....	21
8.	A Planning Framework for Public Consultation: The Rubick's Cube .....	22
9.	A Process Framework for Public Consultation: The Roadmap .....	24
10.	Phases of Consultation .....	25
11.	SWOT .....	27
12.	Force Field Analysis: Plotting Chart .....	28
13.	Force Field Analysis: Goal Statement .....	28
14.	Analyse the Situation .....	29
15.	Determine the Consultation Level .....	31
16.	A Logistics Framework for Public Consultation: S.T.E.P.S.. .....	32
17.	Understand the Decisions at Stake .....	33
18.	Determine the Consultation Period .....	35
19.	The Policy Community .....	36
20.	Stakeholder Analysis by Sector .....	37
21.	Stakeholder Analysis by Geography .....	38
22.	Stakeholder Analysis by Impact and Interest.. .....	39
23.	Stakeholder Common Interests .....	39
24.	Stakeholder Selection Grid .....	40

25.	Stakeholder Coalitional Capacity Grid .....	41
26.	Balancing Requirements and Reality .....	42
27.	Matching Activities to Needs .....	47
28.	The Elements of Principled Negotiation .....	58
29.	A Process Framework for Public Consultation: The Roadmap .....	87

---

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