

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PRINCIPLES

People whose interests stand to be affected by a government decision, commercial transaction or major project have a right to be informed about, consulted on and engaged in the decision making process that grants the approval to proceed. Activities that proceed under that approval should be designed to reflect the public views, preferences and interests expressed.

Tools abound for sharing information, gathering opinion and preference, consulting and engaging people in making decisions. Public participation in important matters of civic interest can be furthered effectively by many different combinations and sequences of techniques. It is less important to employ any specific set of methods of public involvement, than it is to respect the following principles which lend themselves to credibility and effectiveness.

EARLY AND REAL

Notice of and opportunity for involvement occurs while plans are still being formulated and are actually capable of being altered to reflect public comment

SUFFICIENT TIME

Sufficient time is allocated to enable public participation that is scaled to fit the complexity and scope of the planned civic activity

SUFFICIENT RESOURCES

Sufficient resources are made available to ensure that members of the lay public can participate effectively alongside the employed professionals representing commercial interests and government agencies

EXPLICIT TO THE PLANNING CYCLE

Involvement procedures are consistent with the scale and scope of the official planning and approval cycles and geographic extent over which proponents of activities are required to perform and that regulators are required to administer

BALANCED

A balance is struck between the responsibilities of public participants to express their objectives and preferences and the responsibilities of professionals to devise the scientific and technical means to achieve them in practice

OBJECTIVE

Matters of conflict and controversy about the impact of proposed activities on the interests of participants should be referred to objective analyses of the effectiveness of alternative mitigating measures

INCLUSIVE

All relevant interested parties are provided the opportunity, but particularly those whose interests are directly affected by planned activities

CONSTRUCTIVELY INFORMATIVE

Sufficient and understandable information is provided to enable the lay public to make informed comment

SUBSTANTIVE AND INFLUENTIAL

Public comment is focused on substantive matters that can have material influence on the planned activities

RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIVE AND SINCERE

Proponents and agencies that provide for public involvement must be able to document and demonstrate a sincere and respectful response to incoming public comment

EVIDENTIAL AND ASSURED

Those who commission and provide public involvement opportunities must be able to show from field evidence that the commitments made in the process have in fact been delivered on the ground

CONTINUOUS

Communication with and engagement of the public parties is maintained throughout the lifetime of the activities in which they were involved so as to ensure that trust established is conserved

COMPENSATORY

Those parties who stand to be directly injured by a set of activities should be fairly compensated for the impacts identified in the public process