Schedule A – Public Participation Opportunities

Types of Participation	Description of Method	Strengths	Weaknesses	Result
Citizen Panels	• consists of statistically representative sample of residents in a given area • largest response from citizens who represent the general population of an area • panel views are regularly sought using a survey instrument (e.g. postal, telephone surveys)	• inexpensive and effective way to learn about citizens' needs and preferences • panel data can be analyzed for multiple purposes (i.e. ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic, geographic area) • opportunity to collect trend data through multiple surveys to monitor impact of policies over time	• exclusivity of participant selection process • consultation agenda determined by decision-making body (i.e. top down) • under-representation of hard-to-reach groups who refuse to participate • panel members vulnerable to Hawthorne effect (i.e. over time they may be prone to sympathize with decision-makers...)	• due to the expense, as well as, the design, the panel is best suited for the development of major community wide policy documents. • limit to new policy areas, where community opinion and policy direction have yet to be determined and mobilization has not yet occurred
Deliberative Polling	• builds on the opinion poll by incorporating elements of deliberation (input prior to decision)	• provides insights into public opinions and how people come to decisions	• requires preparation time • although sample size is large and random, ensuring	• can provide useful insight into public opinion and useful input into public decision processes

	• involves larger numbers of citizens and may involve less time • measures what public would think if it was informed and engaged around an issue	• seeks informed opinions, does not force people to reach consensus • large, random sample	representativeness is difficult	• complement to representative democracy • not good for crisis decisions • best suited to issues with options and about which the public is not knowledgeable
Focus Groups	• one time discussion of a particular topic • involves small group of individuals selected to meet specific criteria in order to broadly represent a particular segment of society • one-time face-to-face meeting structured to be informal to encourage open discussion among participants	• successful focus group may lead to consensus and feelings of enrichment among participants • good venue for learning about needs of a particular group • remain largely informal, so participants can discuss issues in relaxed atmosphere • a good way to gauge the opinions of the public	• private sector marketing roots limit ability to cover complex issues • lack of informed participants produces superficial discussion • potential for revealing and reinforcing social cleavages • selection criteria can create bias in eliciting opinions • limited number of participants limits representativeness of opinions • potential for ideas expressed	• can be a tool for encouraging discussion and deliberation, but needs to be used with much caution because of the problems associated with it

			to be influenced/shaped by interaction/exchange with others (especially those who are dominant) • resource intensive	
Open Houses	• the public is invited to drop by at any time at a set location on a set day(s) and times • the public can speak with staff, view the displays set up in the room and break into small discussion groups	• relaxed atmosphere • enables staff to tailor responses according to the needs/questions of the public • allows for sensitive topics to be discussed • develops links for the future	• potential for lack of clarity in purpose • staff resource intensive	• suitable for challenging issues
Citizen Advisory Committee	• can be made up of a variety of different organizations (e.g. from governmental to public) • intended to represent the broader public	• if committee is balanced, deliberations can be fruitful • the advice should influence decision making process • should also produce informed citizens, boost trust	• not a representative group of people	

		in institutions and reduce conflict	
Community Planning	• set policy agenda and to discuss citizens' vision for community and services provided in it • more about the outcome of participation (i.e. consensus about the vision or plan) than the process of engagement (who participated and how) • draws upon a range of participation techniques (e.g., pre-circulated consultation documents, written responses, structured public meetings)	• allows for underlying assumptions to be dealt with in a deliberative manner • emphasizes consensus building, collaboration and cooperation • formal outcome is a community plan but emphasis is on reaching a common understanding of issues and finding a shared vision for dealing with them • fosters connections/partnerships between different organizations • educative role	• may set/raise expectations that public bodies are unable to meet
Visioning	• similar to community planning but input sought is about broader "vision" for community services and less about specifics on how to achieve the vision	• emphasizes consensus building, collaboration and cooperation • formal outcome is a community plan	• may set/raise expectations that public bodies are unable to meet

	- deliberative process where ideas are gradually refined through iterative process until a clear statement emerges - outcome is typically an overview of possibilities rather than a definitive plan	but emphasis is on reaching a common understanding of issues and finding a shared vision for dealing with them - fosters connections/partnerships between different organizations - educative role		
Notification, Distribution & Solicitation of Comments	- simplest form of consultation - can involve the sending out of documentation - may also involve other methods	- broad and representative in theory - transparency guaranteed through notification process	- questionable effectiveness in reaching some populations - risk that consultation will be dominated by the best organized groups with easy access to publication - despite the potential for broad participation, the interaction between concerned	

			- public and the authorities is often very limited, with no real possibility for dialogue or negotiation - transparency is threatened when solicitation of comments is targeted to specific groups - not enough time given to soliciting feedback (i.e. sham consultation)	
Surveys	- solicit information from representative sample of citizens - same questions are asked of every individual surveyed - there are a variety of survey types: postal, interviewer, telephone, etc.	- can reach large numbers of people - if same questions are retained, can be used for longitudinal studies (e.g., monitoring change over time)	- the lists may not be representative or comprehensive - questions need to be somewhat simple and straightforward, the information gathered then	- because this is a time consuming process, it is not a good method if quick results are required - can be used during the beginning phases of a study (useful in detecting issues that need to be addressed)

		- can be simplistic and superficial - survey results are often not comparable - the effectiveness of surveys are affected by the rates of response - fundamental decisions have to be made before the survey begins and cannot be changed once survey has been implemented	
Plebiscite	- the process wherein an issue is put to popular vote - can be initiated by governmental or other organizations, or sometimes the citizenry - results may or may not be considered binding	- incites discussion and interest - way to learn public views - way to get citizens directly involved with the legislative process - all voters have equal influence - can potentially involve all members	- results may not be representative if there is low voter turnout - wording can present problems - limited number of times you can use it (i.e. voter fatigue)	- should not replace representative democracy - issue should be answerable by "yes" or "no" - issue should stand on its own (i.e. not so intertwined with another that it becomes impossible to answer) - need to inform citizenry on issue beforehand

		of a local or national population • difficult for the government to ignore the results of a plebiscite	• potential for undue influence if one organization has greater resources than another when campaigning for or against a proposed referendum • very costly process	