ENGAGING CITIZENS

Training Module 1

Defining Community Involvement

What is it and why do we do it?

Community Involvement in the City of Longmont

- Community Involvement was discussed at the City Council Retreat in 2001

- As a result, City Council set one of its 2001 work plan goals:
  “to develop and implement a comprehensive approach for involving the Longmont community in City service delivery and problem-solving efforts”.

- This began the designing of the Community Involvement process for Longmont

What is Community Involvement?

Community involvement is any process that involves the public to achieve an objective.

Longmont’s community process invites…

- Residents
- Elected officals
- Public agencies
- Private enterprises
- Nonprofits
- Volunteers

…to come together to think collectively and act cooperatively to identify issues and find solutions.

Community involvement uses many different types of skills and knowledge

Effective Community Involvement

- Is inclusive
- Is meaningful, productive, and builds capacity in the community
- Builds and strengthens relationships
- Engages residents as partners in identifying issues and solving problems

Why is Community Involvement important to the City of Longmont?

- To strengthen the relevant skills and knowledge of City staff in keeping with the City's expectation that all City staff will utilize effective community involvement, rather than delegating this responsibility to others.

- To address the need to create productive, inclusive and innovative approaches to complex issues.

- To help us strengthen our ability to develop connections with and build capacity of community members.

Levels of Involvement

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What is the promise to the community at each level?

- **Inform:** We will provide you with accurate, balanced and objective information.
- **Consult:** We will consider your comments in the decision-making process.
- **Involve:** We will work to see that your issues and concerns are consistently understood and community input is reflected in the decision making process.
- **Partner:** We will work with you as equal partners.

When would you use the Inform level?

- To respond to community desire to know about services/programs/facilities.
- To promote knowledge and understanding of community needs or activities.
- To encourage community understanding of rules, laws and/or ordinances that are in place to reflect, sustain, and support community standards.
- To promote understanding or address misperceptions.
- To address a temporary impact or one with minimal effect.

When would you use the Consult level?

- To learn community views on changes being considered in existing services/amenities.
- To determine what the community wants or needs when developing new services, programs, policies or facilities.
- To determine which way the community is leaning or thinking about an issue.
- To determine the scope of an issue and which community partners may have an interest or expertise in it. This may help you assess the appropriate level for community involvement.
- To obtain additional information to make a decision.

When would you use the Involve level?

- To give the community the opportunity to influence decisions that have a potentially significant impact.
- To build community ownership in the solution
- To support longer-term strategic issues such as outreach efforts, goal setting, strategic plans, or new facilities.
- To broaden the range of ideas, resources, and solutions considered.

When would you use the Partner level?

- To use city/community partnerships to define, design, implement, and/or sustain initiatives.
- To increase the community's capacity to deal with issues on their own or in partnership with the City or other organizations.
- To foster community-wide collaboration on issues that potentially affect everyone in the community and will have long range impact.
- To address complex issues where many different groups need to be at the table.

What’s an appropriate level of involvement for each?

- A street crew will be working on a residential street, requiring temporary closure.
- A new recreation center is being built.
- You’ve been charged with ending homelessness in Longmont.
- The city wants to change the name of a park which has a neighborhood named after it.
- You’re updating the city’s comprehensive plan.
- You’ve been charged with making education a city-wide value.

Who makes the decision?

- In the first three levels of involvement, the City is the decision-maker.
- At the Partner level, the decision is a partnership between the partners.

Designing an Effective Community Involvement Process

1

Define Project Purpose

⇨ Purpose, Issues/Concerns, Community

⇨ Process & Outcome goals

2

Determine the Appropriate Level of Involvement

⇨ Purpose, Issues/Concerns

3

Develop a Program Plan

⇨ Decision Process, Community Involvement Plan

Step 1: Designing the Purpose of Your Community Involvement Process

It is essential to identify the Issue/Concern requiring community involvement:

- Community involvement begins with input on the issue.
- Never conduct public participation as an attempt to appease or influence the public.

Examples of Process Goals

- Build trust and credibility
- Comply with regulatory requirements
- Public satisfaction with decision-making process
- Ensure full consideration of public input by decision-makers
- Opportunity to provide meaningful input

Examples of Outcome Goals

- Support from elected officials
- Finding solutions that reflect community values and preferences
- More informed community
- More informed staff and officials

Why is understanding **values** and **interests** important in community involvement?

Values are non-negotiable and usually don't change, although they can evolve over time.

Our **interests** are continually changing over our lifetime.

Who is “the community”?

- Often defined as individuals or groups with a perceived stake in the outcome of a decision
- The public speaks with many voices
- Includes both internal and external interests

Are stakeholders the same as “the community”?

Public	Issues and Concerns
Most Likely Public _____ _____	Their issues and concerns _____ _____
Interests with Special Needs _____ _____	Their issues and concerns _____ _____
Others _____ _____	Their issues and concerns _____ _____

Understanding Public Perspectives

Conduct an assessment to learn **who** might be interested and **why**

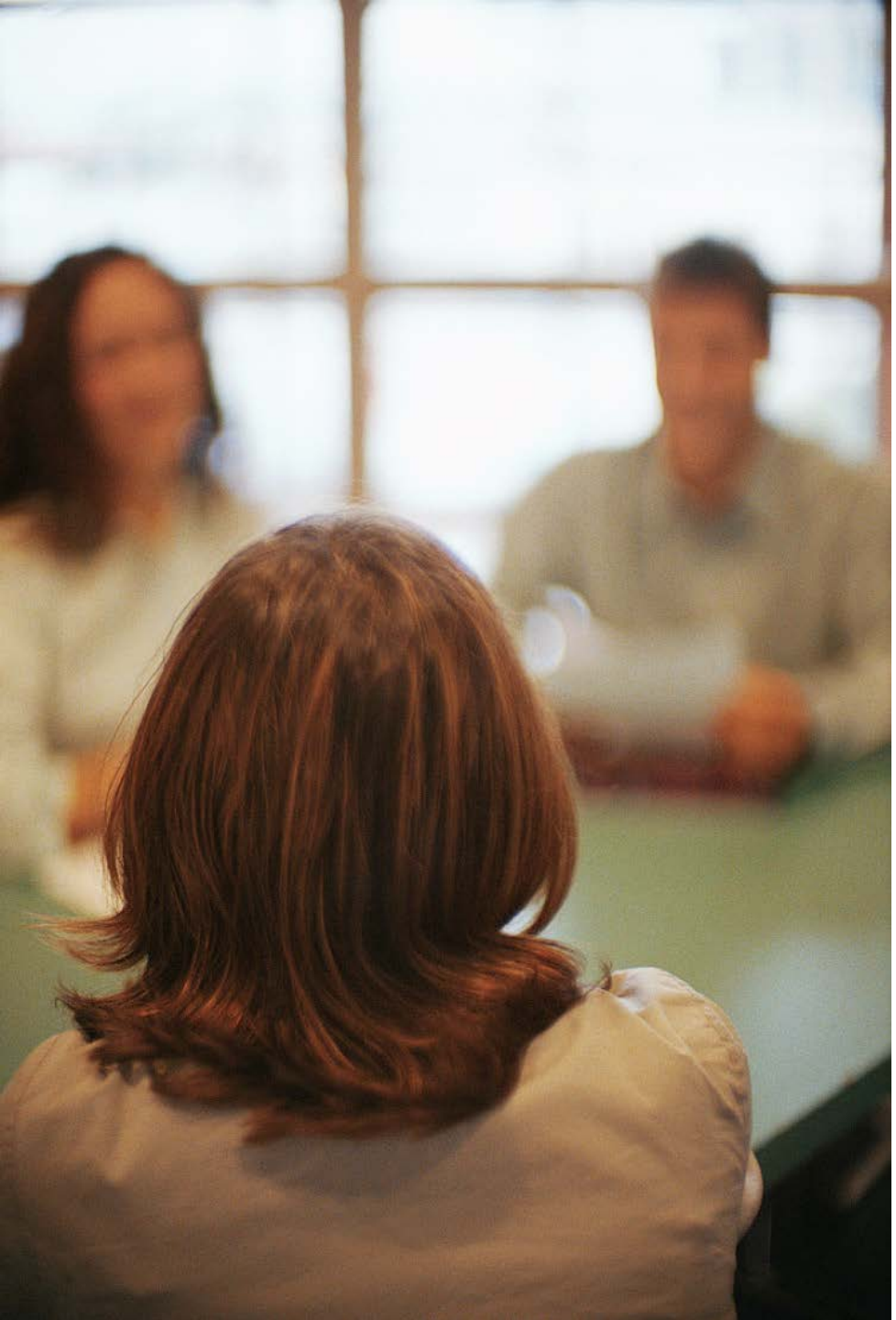
Identify the decision-maker

- Clearly define who has what decision-making **authority** before you begin your public process.
- There may be different decision makers at different points in the process.
- What information do they need to make their decision.

Training Module 2

Facilitation and Meeting Management

Dealing with Challenging People



Facilitation and Meeting Management

- Meeting Preparation
- Ground Rules
- Meeting Objectives
- Agenda
- Facilitation Skills:
    - Openness and Honesty
    - Consistency
    - Focus
    - Active Listening
    - Accessibility
    - Flexibility
    - Assertiveness
    - Enthusiasm

Non-verbal communication

- Body language
- Positioning, i.e. proximity or distance
- Voice quality
- Eye contact

Dealing with challenging people

Ask yourself why you think the person is challenging.

Often the reasons tie to interpreting cues wrong. Look and work to discover their Interest rather then their Position.

Focus on the Process

Anticipate any problems and issues that you may encounter. Think about or ask others what you might expect, then design a structure or control to deal with those issues.

Plan, this is why you are here today. Design a process that meets the needs of the outcomes that you are looking for and anticipates issues that may arise. If you have a precise and well thought out structure to your involvement process, you can rely on it to get you through the process.

Focus on the Process

Value the role and rights of an individual.

- In community meetings or an involvement process, individuals should expect that they have a role some rights in the process. In your process, define that role and respect and honor that role as the “rights of an individual” in a process. An example of an individual’s role could be to:
  - Provide their perspective
  - Have their opinions heard and considered in the process
  - Not be berated for stating their perspectives
  - Be informed of the outcome and how the information will be used
  - Understanding who is making the decision

Focus on the Process

Balance those two roles and rights as you deal with challenging people.

Thinking about the balance between the individuals rights and roles and the rights and roles of the group and the process can create a foundation for you to make decisions and move ahead.

What’s motivating the challenging person?

- Desire for attention
- Power or control
- Loneliness
- Fear
- Need to be heard
- It has worked in the past

Types of Challenging People

We've all been to meetings where a few difficult people manage to disrupt or derail the entire process.

An effective facilitator has to be able to manage an entire group, including the most challenging of individuals.

Pessimist Paul

- Finds fault with every idea. Paul uses words like “never” and “always” to support his core belief that nothing works and nothing ever will.
- It’s important not to try to dispute Paul’s points, but instead try to turn Paul’s complaints into a mandate for action.
- Try asking "Considering that we still have this goal to be reached, what do you suggest?"

Sidebar Sally

- Holds side conversations with the people around her, often distracting the group from the main speaker.
- Making direct eye contact with her may be enough to get her to stop.
- You can also move physically closer to those who are having the side conversation.

Try saying:

- "There seems to be a great deal of interest in this issue. Could we have just one speaker at a time please?"
- “Is there something you’d like to share with the group?”

Off Topic Olivia

- Brings up points or issues that seem unrelated to the topic at hand.

Try:

- Create a list (a “parking lot”) for items to be discussed at another time (flipchart or sheet of paper taped to a wall). *Don’t end the meeting without discussing or otherwise disposing of these topics.*
- You can also try using statements like, “We’ve gotten off track. Let’s refocus and get back to the topic at hand. We were talking about ….”

Rambling Ruth

- Has trouble knowing when to take a breath and let others into the discussion.

- When a Rambling Ruth starts to throw a meeting off track, you may need to interrupt her by summarizing what you've heard and moving on.

Try:

- "You've brought up a lot of great points that will keep us busy for a long time. Would anyone like to add to these?"

- "I'd really like to hear from the rest of the group."

Agitator Andrew

- Is usually unhappy with either the direction the group is going or decisions that are made.
- He may not have the skills to express himself appropriately, or he may be trying to distract the group.

Try:

- “Let me summarize your concerns to be sure that I heard you right…” and acknowledge his emotion by saying, “I can see that you’re pretty upset about this issue.”
- Make sure you stay calm and speak slowly when dealing with Agitator Andrew.

CEO Charlie

- Is a participant whose position of power in the organization or community may make it difficult for others to feel comfortable.

- If Charlie isn't aware of his affect on the group, it may be helpful to pull him aside to give him some gentle guidance.

Try:

- "Because of your leadership role in the community/group/organization, I wonder what would happen if you take a bit of a backseat in the process for the next hour?"

Rude Ralph

- May combine negativity with personal attacks, making him the bully of any group.
- Sadly, Ralph may not even be self-aware enough to know he’s attacking.

Try:

- Re-framing Ralph’s attacks in language that is impersonal but still reflects Ralph’s concerns. Avoid taking an adversarial approach with Ralph, but don’t hesitate to firmly remind the group that the process will only work within a safe environment.
- Sometimes a firm, “Let’s not go there” is all it takes to curb a Rude Ralph.

The Flip

Problems

- Focused on outcomes
- Starts with an issue
- Requires “tweaks” to current process, software, behavior
- Requires top-down or coerced “buy in”
- Requires strict implementation deadlines

Opportunities

- Focused on process
- Begins with the end in mind
- Opens up the box to other ideas
- Builds common vision and instant buy in
- Allows for incorporating other opportunities quickly

Rather than listen to a problem…FLIP!

- Flip the conversation and discover the opportunity…
- Each outcry is an unmet need or a vision that is not fulfilled
- “It sounds like you did not get what you expected? What were you hoping for?”
- “It sounds like you had a definite vision for the future, can you share it with me?”

What experiences have you had with challenging people?

Next Class: Facilitator Practicum

Design a process:

- Purpose
- Process Goals
- Outcome Goals
- Level of Involvement
- Decision Maker
- Techniques
- Evaluation