

*the guide to*

**EFFECTIVE**  
**PARTICIPATION**

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David Wilcox

# Acknowledgements

This guide, published in 1994, is a compilation of other people's ideas, brought together during development of the guide, and from work on consultancy projects over the past 15 years.

The suggestion for the guide came from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, where Dr Janet Lewis and John Low have provided continuing support and guidance.

After seminars with practitioners, an editorial group of Ann Holmes, Joan Kean, Charles Ritchie and Jerry Smith worked with me to create the main theoretical framework for the guide. They have provided continuing inspiration and direction.

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My clients over the years have also helped develop this guide. In particular, the ideas on levels of participation, and the techniques relevant to them, were developed with colleagues Les Robinson and Diane Warburton for St Helen's borough council 10 years ago.

Apologies to anyone whose assistance I have not acknowledged. Any errors are mine.

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# Foreword

Over the past ten years there has been a growing tendency to attempt to get the community either individually or collectively to become involved in the delivery of services at a local level.

The citizens charter, community care, the Housing Acts and City Challenge all offer the community an opportunity to play a role as either partners, providers or consumers. However, it is seductively easy to rush into participation that can be fraught with dangers.

Before getting involved both the service providers and the community would do well to pause for thought. What level of participation do we want? What are the pitfalls? What is the best way of going about it? These are all questions that the community and the service providers (statutory as well as voluntary) should seek to answer before embarking on a participatory journey.

Too often in the past the road to participation has been paved with good intentions only to lead up time consuming and wasteful dead-ends which result in disillusionment and resentment for all concerned.

Participation, like democracy, has meant many things to many people. The opportunities for participation are there to be grasped but only if all those involved have a common understanding and share a common language.

This guide provides both a theoretical framework for common understanding and a dictionary to facilitate the dialogue that can lead to successful participation. The guide also provides practical advice on tools and techniques that can be used to identify blocks and find solutions.

Reflecting on my own experience of working as a local authority community worker, a consultant and now in a new university I can readily see how the guide could be useful in a variety of ways and settings.

For instance, in teaching the guide could provide a starting point to examine the whole concept of participation and the potential pitfalls. In a consultancy/training role the guide could be used to assist the client establish where they are on the 'map' of participation and also where they consider the other players to be. This analysis should provide the basis for more reasoned actions.

For the local authority officer the guide provides a comprehensive description of the implications of participation at whatever level. This can be immensely useful when convincing sceptical managers and councillors that consultation is more than just talking to people.

One of the most common arguments against community participation is that it is costly and time consuming. However, no-one has yet attempted to calculate the costs in terms of time and lost good will of getting it wrong.

TQM (Total Quality Management) is based on the simple notion that it is more cost effective to get it right first time than correct mistakes later. This guide provides some guidelines for TQM in participation.

The toolkit part of the pack provides a range of techniques and tools from which organisations and individuals can select. The tools assist in identifying

blockages and suggest ways forward.

Careful selection and application of the most appropriate tool is an essential part of any job, but organisations using a tool for the first time may need to seek advice. The guide provides some signposts to further information about the tools and their use.

The relationship between providers and customers in the public social services is becoming an increasingly important one. Government is pressing the case for participation and partnership in urban regeneration. This book provides a guide to understanding and developing that relationship.

*Brian Batson  
Management in the Voluntary Sector Unit  
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# Introduction

This guide is intended for the growing number of people who say 'I believe in the idea of community participation – but how do you do it?' Practitioners who are asking, for example:

- How do you run a public meeting which doesn't turn into a slanging match?
- When do you use surveys, and when do you get residents on a housing estate involved in building a model of the future they would like?
- How do you deal with councillors who talk about participation, but are anxious not to lose control or status?
- What is the difference between consultation, participation, partnership and empowerment?

The idea of the guide came from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, who promote and fund a wide range of research and development projects that pose these types of problems.

The original aim was to provide a quick overview of participation and then signpost readers to techniques.

However, it rapidly became clear that while there is plenty of theory about participation, there aren't many cookbooks easily available. In order to write the guide it was necessary to build a theoretical framework – a signposting system – and then summarise key topics and techniques in an A-Z of effective participation.

## A health warning

Although this guide draws on a wide range of expertise, and drafts have been read by experienced practitioners, it hasn't been tested as a whole in the field. All the techniques are drawn from practice, but some come from Operational Research, some from community development, some from commercial consultancy and training. It is a mixed menu. I hope readers will let me know what work well, and what need improvement, so that I can develop an improved later edition. See the inside front cover for details on how to comment.

## The quotations

I have sprinkled quotations through the guide to show that few ideas are new, and they have often been expressed rather better elsewhere. I am conscious that most are from dead white men, who are strongly represented in the handy directories from which they were drawn. I hope readers can offer some more contemporary gems.

## Who are you?

The guide is aimed mainly at people who have the task of starting and managing participation processes, or who control funds and other resources.

## Who am I?

I started my working life as a journalist, mainly writing about planning, housing, transport and development in London. For the past 15 years I have specialised in consultancy and training for groups setting up partnership organisations like development trusts. The guide reflects this background and approach rather than, for example, social or health care.

## Use of material

The guide is intended to be a resource which groups and organisations can develop for their own purposes, and you are free to copy and use material in the guide for internal training. I would be interested in any examples of this use, together with comments and additions for a second edition.

If you would like to use the material more extensively, please contact me at the address on the inside cover. I can also supply the contents of the guide on computer disk.

# A guided tour

The front of the guide is a mixture of theory and practice which signposts readers to topics and methods for participation in the A-Z at the back. It doesn't read like a step-by-step manual or cookbook for several reasons:

- Every situation is different, and while there are some common guidelines and pitfalls, you have to work out your own menu and which recipes are appropriate.
- Effective and successful participation is about style and approach as much as particular recipes.
- Different methods suit different people.

## Theory

The main theoretical ideas are summarised under *10 key issues of participation*. For example:

- I have adapted Sherry Arnstein's idea of a ladder of participation in which the rungs are different levels of participation that authority allows to citizens. Are people being manipulated, or offered some control over their lives?
- Perhaps the most important issues then are who's who – and who decides. Who controls the money, the design of projects, how services are run? What are the different interests in the community? And who decides their levels on the ladder? These are the stakeholders.
- This guide is written mainly for people – here termed practitioners – who have to make those decisions and work with the different interests.
- This participation process takes place over time, and four main phases are identified: initiation, preparation, participation, continuation.
- Different interests may seek different levels of participation, and be involved at different phases of participation.
- The commitment – or apathy – of different interests will depend mainly on the ownership they have of any ideas, and the involvement they are offered in putting ideas into practice.

This theory is developed in more detail in later sections:

*A Framework for participation* brings together the ideas about levels, phases and stakeholders.

*Where do you stand?* develops each of the levels in more detail, with guidelines on when each may be most appropriate, and the methods you might use.

*It takes time* explores the phases of the process from initiation through to continuation, and places strong emphasis on the need for preparation before you start participation proper.

*Signposts from theory to practice* identifies some common issues and questions which keep cropping up in participation processes, and uses them to provide some signposts to topics and techniques in the A-Z section. *Signposts* is the most complex of the sections, and is included so that you see the ideas which underlie the other sections.

## Practice

The first practical section – *Easy Answers* – comes directly after the *Key Issues* to provide some light relief and a flavour of the difficulties that off-the-shelf recipes can produce. Later there are two sections which offer practical suggestions:

*Guidelines on how to...* provides some overall guidelines for participation, then deals with the main tasks in the participation process from the point of view of someone planning and managing the process.

## The A-Z

The *A-Z section* is a mix of topics and methods which aims to provide a pool of ideas and practical advice to supply more detail for the theory and practice sections.

## Using the guide

The guide is not designed to be read through from front to back – you should be able to dip in to it and find cross-references to other sections which will lead you to areas of interest. There is deliberately quite a lot of repetition to allow for this. However, I suggest:

- Read the sections on *10 Key Issues* and the *Framework* before tackling any of the practical detailed sections.
- Use *Easy Answers* as a way to find some pointers to key practical issues in the A-Z.
- Only try and use the *Guidelines on how to ...* section when you feel familiar with most of the rest of the guide.

# 10 key issues of participation

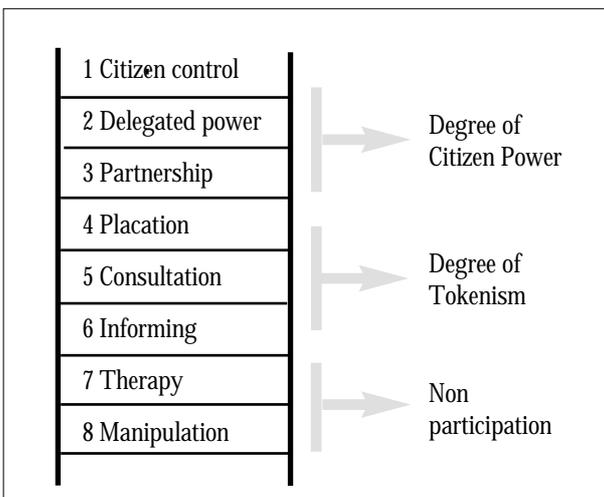
Behind the detailed suggestions in the guide about how to manage participation effectively are 10 key issues. Each of these is also dealt with in the A-Z and in other sections.

## Level of participation

Sherry Arnstein, writing in 1969 about citizen involvement in planning in the United States, described an eight-step ladder of participation. I have altered this to five stances:

- Information
- Consultation
- Deciding together
- Acting together
- Supporting independent community interests

I do not suggest any one stance is better than any other – it is rather a matter of ‘horses for courses’. Different levels are appropriate at different times to meet the expectations of different interests. Here’s the original Arnstein model.



1 Manipulation and 2 Therapy. Both are non participative. The aim is to cure or educate the participants. The proposed plan is best and the job of participation is to achieve public support by public relations.

3 Informing. A most important first step to legitimate participation. But too frequently the emphasis is on a one way flow of information. No channel for feedback.

4 Consultation. Again a legitimate step – attitude surveys, neighbourhood meetings and public enquiries. But Arnstein still feels this is just a window dressing ritual.

5 Placation. For example, co-option of hand-picked ‘worthies’ onto committees. It allows citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum but retains for power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice.

6 Partnership. Power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power holders. Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared e.g. through joint committees.

7 Delegated power. Citizens holding a clear majority of seats on committees with delegated powers to make decisions. Public now has the power to assure accountability of the programme to them.

8 Citizen Control. Have-nots handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a programme e.g. neighbourhood corporation with no intermediaries between it and the source of funds.

## Initiation and process

This guide deals with situations where someone, or some organisation, seeks to involve others at some level – that is, participation doesn’t just happen, it is initiated. Someone (termed here a practitioner) then manages a process over time, and allows others involved more or less control over what happens. In the guide the process is described during four phases: Initiation – Preparation – Participation – Continuation.

## Control

The initiator is in a strong position to decide how much or how little control to allow to others – for example, just information, or a major say in what is to happen. This decision is equivalent to taking a stand on the ladder – or adopted a stance about the level of participation.

## Power and purpose

Understanding participation involves understanding power: the ability of the different interests to achieve what they want. Power will depend on who has information and money. It will also depend on people’s confidence and skills. Many organisations are unwilling to allow people to participate because they fear loss of control: they believe there is only so much power to go around, and giving some to others means losing your own.

However, there are many situations when by working together everyone can achieve more than on their own. This is one benefit of participation. The items on *Power* and *Empowerment* cover the difference between Power to... and Power over.... People are empowered when they have the power to achieve what they want – their purpose.

## Role of the practitioner

This guide is written mainly for people who are planning or managing participation processes – here termed

'practitioners'. Because these practitioners control much of what happens it is important they constantly think about the part they are playing.

## Stakeholders and community

I think that 'stakeholders' is one piece of jargon which really helps our understanding of participation. On the other hand 'community' can be a hindrance.

A stakeholder is anyone who has a stake in what happens. The term forces us to think about who will be affected by any project, who controls the information, skills and money needed, who may help and who may hinder. It does not follow that everyone affected has an equal say; the idea of the ladder is to prompt thinking about who has most influence.

Community is a problem term if it is used as a blanket description for 'all those other people'. There are many communities, defined by, for example, people's shared interests, locality, age or gender. The 'community' which participates will depend on the project or programme because different people are interested in different issues. Where community is used in the guide it is shorthand for communities.

## Partnership

Partnership, like community, is a much abused term. I think it is useful when a number of different interests willingly come together formally or informally to achieve some common purpose. The partners don't have to be equal in skills, funds or even confidence, but they do have to trust each other and share some commitment. In participation processes – as in our personal and social lives – building trust and commitment takes time.

## Commitment

Commitment is the other side of apathy: people are committed when they want to achieve something, apathetic when they don't. But what leads to commitment? Not, in my experience, telling people 'you ought to care', inviting them to public meetings or bombarding them with glossy leaflets. I think people care about what they are interested in, and become committed when they feel they can achieve something. Hard selling won't achieve that. If people are apathetic about your proposals, it may simply be that they don't share your interests or concerns.

## Ownership of ideas

People are most likely to be committed to carry something through if they have a stake in the idea. One of the biggest barriers to action is 'not invented here'. The antidote is to allow people to say 'we thought of that'. In practice that means running brainstorming workshops, helping people think through the practicality of ideas, and negotiating with others a result which is acceptable to as many people as possible.

Clearly this isn't possible if you are simply providing people with information about your own ideas, or consulting them on a limited number of ideas of your own. Apathy is directly proportional to the stake people have in ideas and outcomes.

## Confidence and capacity

Ideas and wish lists are little use if they cannot be put into practice. The ability to do that depends as much on people's confidence and skills as it does on money. Many participation processes involve breaking new ground – tackling difficult projects and setting up new forms of organisations.

It is unrealistic to expect individuals or small groups suddenly to develop the capability to make complex decisions and become involved in major projects. They need training – or better still the opportunity to learn formally and informally, to develop confidence, and trust in each other.

## The next sections

Each of the terms above is dealt with in more detail in the *A-Z section*, and you may wish to skip the following sections and browse the A-Z, then return to some of the theory.

The first theoretical section, *A Framework for Participation*, takes the revised ladder of participation, and extends it across time – the process – and across interests – the stakeholders.

Before that here are some apparently easy answers to participation problems.

# Easy answers

**F**aced with ideas like levels of participation, different phases and roles you may be tempted by some quick fixes for your participation problems. These can bring their own difficulties.

## 'What we need is a public meeting'

You will certainly need to meet the public, but the conventional set-up with a fixed agenda, platform and rows of chairs is a stage set for conflict. Among the problems are:

- The audience will contain many different interests, with different levels of understanding and sympathy. It is difficult to know how to pitch a presentation.
- It is very difficult to keep to a fixed agenda – people may bring up any issue they chose and you just look authoritarian if you try and shut them up.
- Few people get a chance to have a say.

*As an alternative:*

- Identify and meet key interests informally.
- Run workshop sessions for different interest groups.
- Bring people together after the workshop sessions in a report-back seminar. By then everyone should have some ideas in common.
- If you must do a one-off meeting, split people into small groups early on and run a report back in the second half.
- Make clear in all publicity that it is an ideas session with group discussion.
- Plan the layout of the room(s) so you avoid 'them and us', and can split easily into groups.
- In short, makes a public meeting the last thing you do, not the first.

*See Access, Public meetings, Workshops.*

## 'A good leaflet, video and exhibition will get the message across'

These may well be useful tools, but it is easy to be beguiled by the products and forget what you are trying to achieve.

*Before you brief the production team first consider:*

- What level of participation are you aiming for? If it is anything more than information-giving, you are looking for feedback and possibly other people's ideas and commitment. High-cost presentations suggest you have made up your mind.
- What response do you want – and can you handle it?
- Could you achieve more with lower-cost materials and more face-to-face contact?

*See Communications, Where do you stand?, Videos*

## 'Commission a survey'

A questionnaire study and/or in-depth discussion groups can be an excellent ways to start a participation process. On the other hand they can be a magnificent way of avoiding the issue of what you want by asking other people what they want. Fine, if you are then able to deliver.

*Bear in mind:*

- Surveys require expert design and piloting to be useful.
- They are only as good as the brief you provide. Why do you want a survey?
- It is unwise to jump from an analysis of the results straight to proposed solutions, particularly if you want the commitment of other interests. The analysis will inevitably be an abstraction, and the ideas will not be 'owned' by anyone unless people have a chance to think them through.
- In planning a survey: first put yourself on the receiving end of the questioning, and second design it as part of a process which will lead through to some action.

*See Surveys.*

## 'Appoint a liaison officer'

That may be a useful step, but not if everyone else thinks it is the end of their involvement in the process. Are you just trying to pass the buck to someone else?

*Aim to empower your liaison officer. Consider:*

- Do they have the necessary skills and resources for the job?
- Will they get the backing of other colleagues?
- Are they being expected to occupy conflicting roles – that is, wear too many hats? It is difficult to present yourself as a neutral facilitator if you are also making recommendations on funding. The temptation to manipulate agendas is strong.

*See It takes time.*

## 'Work through the voluntary sector'

Voluntary bodies are a major route to communities of interest, and may have people and resources to contribute to the participation process. However, they are not 'the community'.

- There will be many small community groups who are not part of the more formalised voluntary sector.
- Voluntary groups, like any organisations, will have their own agendas – funding targets to achieve, issues to pursue. They are not a neutral.

*Treat voluntary organisations as another sectoral interest in the community – albeit a particularly important one:*

- Check out organisations with a number of different sources. Having said all that, voluntary organisations will have a

wealth of experience and are essential allies. They've been through many of the problems of involving people before.

*See Community, Stakeholders, Voluntary sector.*

## 'Set up a consultative committee'

Some focus for decision-making will be necessary in anything beyond simple consultation processes. However:

- Even if a committee is elected or drawn from key interest groups it will not be a channel for reaching most people.
- People invited to join a committee may feel uncomfortable about being seen as representatives.
- The committee can just reinforce 'them and us' attitudes if some members have more power than others.

*Consider instead:*

- A group which helps you plan the participation process.
- Surveys, workshops and informal meetings to identify other people who might become actively involved.
- A range of groups working on specific issues.
- Defining any central group in terms of the longer term aim. For example, if a Management Board or Trust is a possibility, you are looking for a 'shadow' Board.

*See Committees, Workshops.*

## 'There's no time to do proper consultation'

That may be the case if the timetable is imposed externally – or do you feel that consultation will raise questions you can't answer? Beware: the questions won't go away, and you could be forced into a climb-down later on in the face of protest.

*If the timetable is genuinely tight:*

- Explain the pressure that you are under.
- At least produce a leaflet or send out a letter.
- Run a crash programme for those interested – perhaps over a weekend.

*See It takes time, Timeline.*

## 'Run a Planning for Real session'

Special 'packaged' techniques can be very powerful ways of getting people involved. However there are horses for courses – no one technique is applicable to all situations. Are you just falling into the technology trap – believing that a gadget will fix the problem? This guide aims to suggest what is appropriate when.

*See Planning for Real.*

## 'It's technical – requiring a professional solution'

If you believe that, why consult anyone? Before following this arrogant course, reflect on the many examples of disaster and political miscalculation where the experts knew best.

*Before leaving it to the experts consider:*

- Are you sure you know what the problem is – would everyone else agree?
- Is there really only one way of fixing things?
- Do you need the support of other interests to carry the proposals through? If you don't give them an early say in the solution they could become part of the problem.

*See Problem clarification, Decision-making.*

## 'Bring in consultants expert in community participation'

There's some truth in the saying that 'consultants are people who steal your watch in order to tell you the time'. Often you have the answer yourself, and you are just trying to avoid grappling with the issue. Of course there are situations when you need outside expertise – whether technical, or in clearing your own mind or facilitating the participation process.

*If you do use consultants:*

- Get a recommendation from a previous client if possible.
- Give a clear brief on what you are trying to achieve, the level of control and boundaries for action. At the same time be prepared to discuss and, if necessary, renegotiate the brief.
- Encourage them to ask hard questions and provide an independent perspective.
- Play an active role in their work to provide continuing guidance and learn from the experience. Don't use the consultants as insulation.
- Make sure you and your organisation can deliver in response to the ideas they produce, and you can handle things when they leave.
- Include work within your organisation to parallel that with community interests. Many problem in participation processes arise within the promoting organisation.
- Agree a realistic budget – then challenge the consultants to perform.
- Remember that most consultancy exercises are only as good as the client.

*See Consultants.*

# A framework for participation

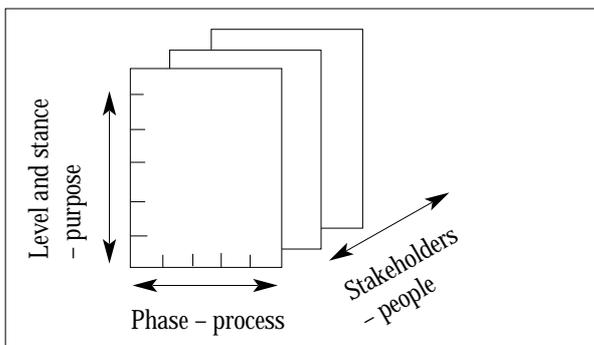
This section introduces a theoretical model for thinking about participation which brings together ideas from the *10 Key Issues* section, and which provides a framework for the rest of sections.

- There are different levels of participation appropriate for different situations.
- There isn't one 'community' but many interests – or stakeholders – to consider.
- Participation takes time.
- You must be clear about the part you play in the process – your role .
- All these issues influence which methods you should use.

## Three dimensions of the framework

The framework is developed from the idea of a ladder of participation discussed in the *10 Key Issues* section. The framework adds two other dimensions to the idea of the level of participation on a ladder:

- The phase or stage of participation.
- Different interests – or stakeholders – may be at different levels or stages of participation.



See the set of questions at the end of this section about who 'you' are and what you are trying to achieve.

## 1 Level of participation – where do you stand?

**To lead the people, walk behind them.**

*Lao-Tzu.*

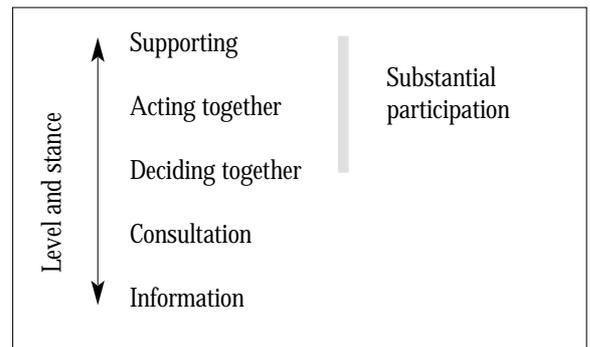
The ladder of participation model described in the previous section suggests some levels are better than others. In this framework I suggest it is more of a case of horses for courses – different levels are appropriate in different circumstances.

The key issue is what 'stance' are you taking as someone managing a participation process, or controlling resources,

and your reasons for doing so.

I suggest thinking of five levels – or stances – which offer increasing degrees of control to the others involved.

- **Information.** The least you can do is tell people what is planned.



Compare this diagram with Sherry Arnstein's ladder in *10 Key Issues*

- **Consultation.** You offer a number of options and listen to the feedback you get.
- **Deciding together.** You encourage others to provide some additional ideas and options, and join in deciding the best way forward.
- **Acting together.** Not only do different interests decide together what is best, but they form a partnership to carry it out.
- **Supporting independent community initiatives.** You help others do what they want – perhaps within a framework of grants, advice and support provided by the resource holder. The 'lower' level of participation keep control with the initiator – but they lead to less commitment from others. Each of these levels is discussed in more detail in the next main section: *Where do you stand?*

## 2 The phase – where have you got to?

**It is a long way from conception to completion.**

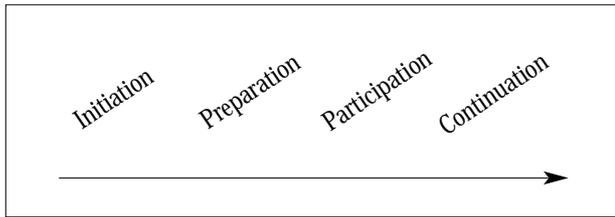
*Moliere.*

Participation is a process in which people have to think through what they want, consider some options, and work through what should happen. I suggest there are four main phases:

- **Initiation.** The phase at which something triggers the need to involve people, and you start to think what that involves.
- **Preparation.** The period when you think through the process, make the first contacts, and agree an approach.

■ **Participation.** The phase in which you use participation methods with the main interests in the community.

■ **Continuation.** What happens in this phase will depend very much on the level of participation – you may be reporting back on consultation, or at another level setting up partnership organisations.



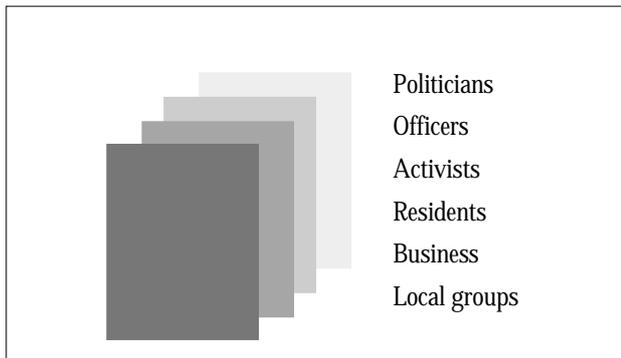
These different phases are discussed in more detail in the section *It takes time*.

### 3 People – who is involved?

**All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.**

*George Orwell.*

Some people will want – or demand – more involvement than others. Others will wish not to be involved. Identifying these different interests – stakeholders – and negotiating the level of participation appropriate is the third dimension of the framework.



Some of the main issues in participation are about where power and control lies between these interests, and the role of 'you' in this.

Before starting a participation process it is important to reflect on the role you have – the hat you are wearing. The way you act may be influenced by how far you control resources, to whom you are answerable. People's attitudes to you will certainly be influenced by the role and power they think you have.

It is also essential to clarify the purpose of participation – because that will determine which stakeholders benefit. These issues are discussed in the items on *Beneficiaries*, *Power* and *Empowerment*.

### Effective participation

I think participation may work best for all concerned when each of the key interests – the stakeholders – is satisfied with the level of participation at which they are involved.

That is, those who don't have much at stake may be

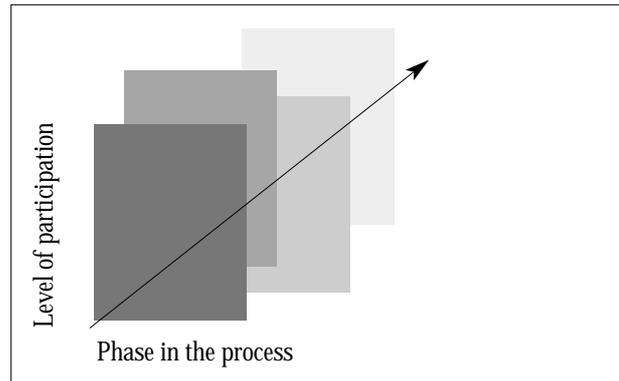
happy to be informed or consulted. Others will want to be involved in decisions and possibly action to carry them out.

The difficult task for the practitioner managing the process is to identify these interests, help them work out what they want, and negotiate a route for them to achieve it.

The power of the practitioner lies in influencing who will benefit. Participation is not a neutral process. As yourself:

- What is the purpose of the process?
- Who benefits? Who pays? Who controls?

With different interests seeking different levels of participation, and being in different phases, effective participation can seem like shooting an arrow through a number of keyholes.



### Some early questions

At the start of a participation process a number of key questions should help you decide your approach:

- Who are you? For example:
  - Someone in a position of power controlling funds or other resources.
  - Someone with influence because you are planning or managing a participation process.
  - Someone with professional expertise or knowledge?
- What do you want to achieve by working a participatory style?
  - To try and develop plans that meet people's expectations.
  - To give people a say in the plans.
  - To give people control over the solutions.
- Who will have the final say over decisions?
  - Yourself.
  - A management team.
  - Everyone who gets involved.
  - A political institution or other body
- How ready are people, and organisations, to work in a participatory way?
  - Do they have the desire?
  - Do they have the skills?
  - Do they have the authority?

# Where do you stand?

One of the main ideas in the guide is that of level of participation, and the an organisation promoting participation takes a stance about the level it suggests is appropriate for different interests. This section deals with five levels.

## Choosing a level – taking a stance

The previous section developed the idea of levels of participation based on Arnstein's ladder described in 10 Key ideas. Here each level is dealt with in more detail, with suggestions on where it is appropriate.

This section, as others, is written on the assumption that you are promoting or managing a participation process. Your precise role will affect what stance you take.

For example, if you are controlling resources you may be very clear and firm about how much say you are prepared to offer others. If you are acting as a neutral facilitator you may be helping different interests negotiate appropriate levels.

For further discussion of these issues, see Some early questions at the end of the previous section, the items on Power and Role of the practitioner.

## Stance 1: Information

**information is giving out; communication is getting through.**

*Sydney Harris.*

Information-giving underpins all other levels of participation, and may be appropriate on its own in some circumstances. However, you will hit problems if all you offer is information and people are expecting you to provide for more involvement.

### Basics

- The information-giving stance is essentially a 'take it or leave it' approach.
- People may not accept they can't have a say. Is there really no alternative to the ideas you are putting forward?
- Your information will be judged on who you are and your style as well as what you say.
- Even though you may not want much feedback, put yourself in the place of the people you are communicating with: the meaning of any communication lies in the response that you get – not what you say.

### Where appropriate

Information-only may be appropriate when:

- You have no room for manoeuvre and must follow one course of action – for example, where there is a clear legal requirement.

- An authority is reporting a course of action which is essentially internal and doesn't affect others.
- At the start of a consultation or other process, with the promise of more opportunity to participate later.

Information-only is inappropriate when the following apply (alternative stances in brackets):

- You are seeking to empower community interests. Information is necessary for empowerment, but seldom enough on its own (3, 4 or 5).
- There are alternatives and others have a legitimate interest in developing them (3 or 4).

## Methods

See the A-Z for methods to use with this and other levels. Consider the following:

- Print: leaflets, newsletters, etc.
- Presentations at meetings.
- Briefing the media through press releases and press conferences.
- Advertising through posters, radio, press.
- Film or video.

Avoid:

- Any methods which imply that people can have a say.

## Guidelines

In planning how to inform people, and carrying this out:

- Consider what frame of mind your audience is in – for example, what do they expect or know already?
- Try a simple presentation on colleagues or a less informed audience before you prepare materials.
- Use language and ideas which your audience will find familiar.
- Be clear about why you are just informing rather than consulting.

## Possible problems

*You have a low budget.*

Concentrate on using existing channels of communication: local groups, media, simple posters or leaflets. Be prepared to answer questions.

*The PR department of your organisation wants to take over communications.*

Insist on getting the basic messages clear before anything gets 'glossed up'. Work on one product – say a leaflet – and use that as the reference for other things. Make sure you have internal agreement to any messages.

*You get no response from the audience you are addressing.*

Since you are not asking people to become involved, that may be understandable. However, ask a few people to play back to

you what they understood from your communication to see that you have got your message across.

*People want more say.*

Do they have a case? Who is setting the rules? Take comments seriously. It is easier to change the level of participation and your stance early on. Later it may become an uncomfortable U-turn.

### Information checklist

Before taking up an information-giving stance consider:

- Are you clear which interests you are informing, and how much they know already?
- Are they likely to be satisfied with only information?
- Can you present your proposals in a way people will understand and relate to?
- Have you identified appropriate communication methods for the time available and audience?
- Are you prepared to change your stance if people want more than information?

## Stance 2: consultation

Consultation is appropriate when you can offer people some choices on what you are going to do – but not the opportunity to develop their own ideas or participate in putting plans into action.

### Basics

- Consultation means giving people a restricted choice and role in solutions. You may consult on the problems, offer some options, allow comment, take account and then proceed – perhaps after negotiation. You are not asking for help in taking action.
- All the basics of information-giving apply, plus the need to handle feedback.

### Where appropriate

The consultation stance is likely to be most appropriate when:

- You want to improve a service.
- You have a clear vision and plans to implement a project or programme, and there appear to be a limited range of options.
- These options can be set out in terms which community interests can understand and relate to their own concerns or needs.
- The initiator of the proposals can handle feedback and is prepared to use this to choose between or modify options.

It is inappropriate when the following apply (alternative stances in brackets):

- You aren't going to take any notice of what people say.
- You are seeking to empower community interests (3, 4 or 5).
- You are not clear what you wish to do and are seeking ideas (3 or 4).
- You don't have the resources or skills to carry out the

options presented, or other means of implementing (choose stance 4 or 5).

### Methods

Consider the following methods for consultation:

- Surveys and market research.
- Consultative meetings.
- Consultative committees.
- Simulations where the options and constraints are clear.

These methods may be used in conjunction with information-giving and presentational techniques, for example:

- Advertisements.
- Media briefing.
- Leaflets and posters.
- Exhibitions.
- Videos.

### Guidelines

- Consider what response you want and how you will handle it as well as what you are presenting.
- Make clear how realistic the different options are, and what the pros and cons are as you see them.
- Avoid using methods like Planning for Real which encourage people to put forward their own ideas, unless you are moving to stance 3 – deciding together.
- Be open about your own role, who ultimately takes decisions, how and when this will be done.
- If you set up a consultative committee, give it clear terms of reference.

### Possible problems

*You have a low budget.*

Use basic information-giving methods plus meetings hosted by local organisations. Run an open meeting at the end of the process.

*The PR department wants to take it over.*

See information giving. Consider throughout: will people understand the options, are they realistic, can we respond to feedback.

*You don't have time to do things properly.*

Be honest about the deadlines, and use the time-pressure to advantage. You could, for example, hold a weekend event with the key interests.

*You get more – or less – response than expected.*

Was consultation the appropriate stance? Did you think it through from the audience's point of view?

## Consultation checklist

Before taking up a consultation stance consider:

- Are you clear which interests you are consulting, and have you the means to contact them?
- Are they likely to be satisfied with consultation?
- Can you present your vision and options for achieving it in a way people will understand and relate to?
- Have you identified appropriate communication methods for the time available and likely participants?
- Can you and your colleagues handle the feedback?
- Have you arranged for a report back to those consulted?
- Are you prepared to change your stance if people want more than consultation?
- Are you just seeking endorsement of your plans?

## Stance 3: deciding together

Deciding together is a difficult stance because it can mean giving people the power to choose without fully sharing the responsibility for carrying decisions through.

### Basics

- Deciding together means accepting other people's ideas, then choosing from options you have developed together.
- The basics of consultation apply, plus the need to generate options together, choose between them, and agree ways forward.
- The techniques are more complex.
- People need more confidence to get involved.
- The time scale for the process is likely to be much longer.

### Where appropriate

Deciding-together may be appropriate when:

- It is important that other people 'own' the solution.
- You need fresh ideas.
- There is enough time.

Deciding together is inappropriate when the following apply (try alternative stances in brackets).

- You have little room for manoeuvre (1 or 2).
- You can't implement decisions yourself (4 or 5).

### Methods

Consider the following methods:

- Information-giving methods to start the process.
- Stakeholder analysis to identify who should be involved.
- SWOT analysis to understand where you are.
- Brainstorming, Nominal Group Technique, Surveys to develop some options.
- Cost/Benefit Analysis to make choices.

- Strategic Choice, Planning for Real, and other simulations as powerful overall techniques.
- SAST and Action Planning to decide what next.

### Guidelines

- Plan the process before you start. Give yourself enough time.
- Define clearly the roles and responsibilities of the different interests – who has a say, who will take action.
- Be open and honest about what you want to achieve, and any limits on options.
- If you set up any organisational structures, agree clear terms of reference and powers.

### Possible problems

*You don't have the time.*

Consider whether stance 2 – consulting people – would be more appropriate.

*You are not sure if your colleagues will back up any decisions.*  
Involve them in the process. Run internal workshops before involving others.

*People aren't interested in joining in.*

Spend more time on preliminary networking – basically talking to people before holding any meetings. Run sessions hosted by existing organisations as well as open sessions.

*The techniques look too complicated.*

Try some of the easier ones with a small group that you know. Bring in an external trainer or facilitator.

## Deciding together checklist

Before taking up a deciding-together stance consider:

- Are you prepared to accept other people's ideas? What are the boundaries?
- Are you clear who it is appropriate to involve?
- Are you clear about what you want to achieve, and the boundaries to any ideas you will accept to get there?
- Do you have the skills to use joint decision-making methods?
- Do you have the authority to follow through with solutions which are decided with others?
- Have you involved colleagues who need to be part of the solution?

## Stance 4: Acting together

Acting together may involve short-term collaboration or forming more permanent partnerships with other interests.

### Basics

- Acting together in partnership involves both deciding together and then acting together
- This means having a common language, a shared vision of what you want, and the means to carry it out.

- Partners need to trust each other as well as agree on what they want to do.
- Effective partnerships take a long time to develop – shot gun marriages are unlikely to work.
- Each partner needs to feel they have an appropriate stake in the partnership, a fair say in what happens, and chance of achieving what they want.

## Where appropriate

Acting together may be appropriate when:

- One party cannot achieve what they want on their own.
- The various interests involved all get some extra benefit from acting together.
- There is commitment to the time and effort needed to develop a partnership.

Acting together is not likely to be appropriate when the following apply (alternative stances in brackets):

- One party holds all the power and resources and uses this to impose its own solutions (1 or 2).
- The commitment to partnership is only skin deep (1 or 2).
- People want to have a say in making decisions, but not a long term stake in carrying out solutions (3).

## Methods

Consider the following methods:

- Information giving methods to start the process.
- Methods for deciding together to create a shared vision.
- Team building exercises.
- Design exercises.
- Business planning exercises.
- Interim structures like working parties and steering groups as a focus for decision making and accountability.
- Longer-term structures through which you can work together.

## Guidelines

As for Deciding together, plus...

- Spend time getting to know and trust each other.
- Plan for the long-term sustainability of any organisational structure that is needed to implement and maintain schemes.
- Avoid staffing partnership organisations with people who are accountable to only one of the partners.
- Develop a common language, shared vision and corporate accountability.

## Possible problems

*Early discussion focuses on constitutions.*

The final structure should come last – after you have decided what you are going to do, how to get the resources, what skills you need, and how power and responsibility will be shared. Set up interim structures like a steering group with clear terms of reference.

*Conflicts arise in steering group meetings.*

Spend more time in workshop sessions and informal meetings

to develop a shared vision and mutual understanding.

*Some interests feel excluded.*

Clarify who the stakeholders are, and what their legitimate interests are. Again, run workshops rather than committees. Use an independent facilitator.

## Acting together checklist

Before taking up a 'acting together' stance consider:

- Are you clear about what you want to achieve, and how flexible you are in pursuing that vision?
- Have you identified potential partners?
- Do you have any evidence that they share a similar vision, and are interested in a partnership with you to achieve it?
- Do they trust you?
- Do you have the time and commitment necessary to form a partnership?
- Are you prepared to share power?

## Stance 5: Supporting local initiatives

***There are no free lunches.***

*Anon.*

Supporting independent community-based initiatives means helping others develop and carry out their own plans. Resource-holders who promote this stance may, of course, put limits on what they will support.

### Basics

- This is the most 'empowering' stance –provided people want to do things for themselves. They may, quite properly, choose a lower level of participation.
- Carrying through the stance may involve people in setting up new forms of organisations to handle funds and carry out projects or programmes.
- The process has to be owned by, and move at the pace of, those who are going to run the initiative – although funders and others may set deadlines.

### Where appropriate

This stance may be appropriate:

- Where there is a commitment to empower individuals or groups within the community.
- Where people are interested in starting and running an initiative.

It is not likely to be appropriate when the following apply (alternative stances in brackets):

- Community initiatives are seen as 'a good thing' in the abstract and pushed on people from the top down. (1,2,3).
- Where there is no commitment to training and support.

- Where there aren't the resources to maintain initiatives in the longer-term.
- Where time is very short.

## Methods

- An offer of grants, advice and support – perhaps conditional on some commitment being made by the other interests involved.
- Workshops for helping community groups create a shared vision and plan their action.
- Team building exercises.
- Commitment planning.
- Business planning exercises.
- Workshops on design, fund-raising and publicity.
- Visits to similar projects.
- Interim structures like working parties and steering groups as a focus for decision making and accountability.
- Longer-term structures controlled by community interests.
- Development trusts.

## Guidelines

- Be clear about your role and whether produces any conflict between, for example, controlling resources and helping community interests develop their own ideas and organisation.
- If you are controlling resources make sure you have agreement from your colleagues and can deliver what you promise before you start.
- If you are acting as a facilitator or trainer make sure the resource-holders are involved in the process. If possible run internal workshops with them.
- Be realistic about the time the process will take.

## Possible problems

*Community interests find it difficult to get organised.*

Provide support and, if necessary training. Arrange visits to similar projects elsewhere. Treat people development as seriously as project development.

*The steering group or other body cannot make decisions.*

Organise workshop sessions outside formal committees.

*Little happens between meetings.*

End each meeting with an action planning session. If funds are available appoint a development worker. Keep in contact through a regularly produced newsletter.

*Community interests become committed to action, but resource-holders can't deliver.*

Run internal sessions to gain commitment within the supporting organisations. Use the media.

## Supporting checklist

Before taking up a 'we will support community initiatives' stance consider:

- Do you understand the different interests in the community and their needs?
- Have you contacted existing community and voluntary sector organisations?
- Will your colleagues support the stance?
- Do you have the skills and resources to offer?
- Are you clear about the role you are playing?

## Stances in summary

Level/stance	Information	Consultation	Deciding together	Acting together	Supporting
<b>Typical process</b>	<b>Presentation and promotion</b>	<b>Communication and feedback</b>	<b>Consensus building</b>	<b>Partnership building</b>	<b>Community development</b>
<b>Typical methods</b>	Leaflets Media Video	Surveys Meetings	Workshops Planning for Real Strategic Choice	Partnership bodies	Advice Support Funding
<b>Initiator stance</b>	'Here's what we are going to do'	'Here's our options – what do you think?'	'We want to develop options and decide actions together'	"We want to carry out joint decisions together"	"We can help you achieve what you want within these guidelines"
<b>Initiator benefits</b>	Apparently least effort	Improve chances of getting it right	New ideas and commitment from others	Brings in additional resources	Develops capacity in the community and may reduce call on services
<b>Issues for initiator</b>	Will people accept bo consultation?	Are the options realistic? Are there others?	Do we have similar ways of deciding? Do we know and trust each other?	Where will the balance of control lie? Can we work together?	Will our aims be met as well as those of other interests?
<b>Needed to start ...</b>	Clear vision Identified audience Common language	Realistic options Ability to deal with responses	Readiness to accept new ideas and follow them through	Willingness to learn new ways of working	Commitment to continue support

## Notes to the table

The table summarises ideas from the section on stances.

The typical process row makes a link with the types of processes usually associated with the level. Higher levels are likely to involve some elements of lower ones too – you can't build partnerships without communicating well and developing consensus. Community development is not limited to supporting.

Typical methods gives some examples of the structures and methods used.

The initiator stance row suggests how the initiator might present themselves and the level they are working at to others.

The initiator benefits row suggests what the initiator might have in mind – but this will obviously depend on the situation. If the initiator is being open, this agenda should be made obvious. People are generally sensitive to hidden agendas: they may not know quite what is going on, but suspicion breeds mistrusts and undermines the chances of collaboration.

Needed to start... suggests some of the prerequisites for success – that is, pitfalls if you don't get them right. As with the process row some at the top also require those lower down.

The diagram is meant to be an aid to thinking, rather than a rigid framework. The idea of an initiator taking a stance should be useful, for example, in helping an authority think through what it is trying to achieve. However, you should recognise it may be necessary to change stance. For example:

- An information giving process may lead to protests, and turn into a consultation or joint decision-making process.
- An authority may invite people to join in a partnership or joint decision-making process, only to find that most people just want to be consulted on a limited range of options.

# It takes time

Often participation is treated as a limited set of events – a survey, an exhibition, one or two meetings. However, if participation is to be more than superficial consultation it must be treated as a process which takes some time. This section deals with the main phases of participation, and stresses that success depends on careful preparation.

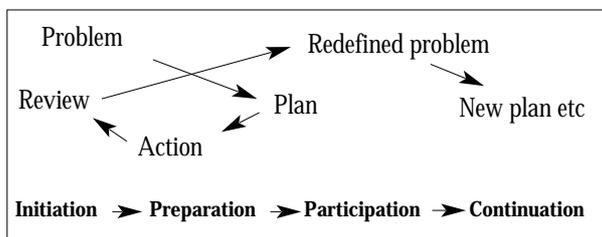
## The participation process

The Framework section suggested treating participation as a process which has four main phases:

- Initiation
- Preparation
- Participation
- Continuation

Of course, in reality life is never that tidy, and we find that we are pitched into trying to do things without enough planning. Often it is difficult to see what to do before trying something out, and reflecting on what happened. It may only be then that we find out what the real problem is.

This cycle goes on throughout any process to carry out a project or programme. Participation is no different. Because participation doesn't run on predetermined tracks it isn't possible to set out a step by step guide – every situation



will be different. However there are some key issues which keep cropping up, and some are more important in particular phases. The questions and checklists in this section all relate back to the main question set in the *Signposts from theory to practice* section.

## Initiation

The process of participation may be triggered in many ways:

- A campaign of protest may be turned into a more collaborative programme of action.
- An authority may promote a project.
- Government may announce funding is available for community-based projects.

Often situations will be messy and unclear, with different people and groups having different views of what is going on. In order to move into a planned process of participation, it is important to start asking some key questions. These will recur in different forms throughout.

For guidance see the section *Guidelines on how to ...*, and A-Z

entries on *Aims and objectives, Confidence, Levels of participation, Stakeholders, SWOT*.

## An outline agenda

- Who is going to champion the process?
- Who pays? Who administers? Who convenes ?
- What are you trying to achieve through participation?
- Who are the key interests in the community?
- Who are the key interests within any organisation promoting participation, and what are their attitudes?
- What level of participation is likely to be appropriate and acceptable?
- How will you know when you have succeeded?

## Preparation

As these key issues become clearer, it is important to prepare on three fronts:

- Initial spadework with whoever is promoting the process.
- Agreeing the approach with key interests.
- Developing a strategy.

Most experienced facilitators and trainers agree that 80% of successful participation lies in preparation – so don't skimp on it .

## Spadework with the promoter

In my experience the toughest problems in participation processes do not stem from apathy, ignorance or lack of skills among residents or other community interests. Given time and effort these can be worked through.

The most intractable problems arise because organisations promoting participation aren't clear about what they want to achieve, are fearful of sharing control, and seldom speak with one voice.

Unless these issues are tackled at the outset they are likely to lead to frustration, conflict and disillusion further down the line. The key issue is, what does the promoting organisation want from the participation process? The most common goals are:

- Improving the quality of the outcome – the project or programme.
- Developing the capabilities of the participants.
- Building working relationships of benefit for the future.
- Increasing ownership and the acceptability of the outcome.

In preparing a participation process it is important to consider the mix of these desired goals, and whether they are they realistic. In particular, is there the internal commitment within the organisation to bring them about? A group of experienced practitioners who discussed these issues at the Gorbals workshop in November 1993, developed the following checklist.

## The internal agenda

- What does the organisation want to achieve from the participation process?
- What are the boundaries of the task? What is fixed, and what is still open?
- What level of participation is appropriate with the different outside interests?
- Can the organisation respond to the outcomes of the process or are they intending to manipulate the participants towards pre-determined outcomes?
- What is the 'real' agenda? Are there any hidden agendas?
- What is the history of the issues, and what are the positions of the various parties?
- Who owns the process within the organisation? Is there more than one owner and if so how will this be managed?
- Are the senior officers and politicians prepared to make a public commitment and to be accessible to the participants?
- Who is involved internally? Have they got their internal act together? Are they really committed to the process? Will they stick at it when the going gets tough?
- What resources are available? How much time is there?
- How does this measure up to the support or involvement expected by community interests?

If you are acting as the manager of the participation process it is important that the internal 'client' understands, agrees and values your role.

In order to achieve this understanding it is a good idea to apply participation techniques to the internal process with the client. After this experience they are more likely to understand the techniques you use and support you when you apply them externally.

## Understanding key interests

Before starting the formal processes of producing leaflets, calling meetings or running workshops it is important to understand who's who and what outcomes they may be looking for. Here's a checklist of some of the early tasks and issues:

- Consider the potential obstacles to participation, for example: rigid views, authoritarian cultures, grudges and antagonisms, passive and hard-to-reach interest groups, NIMBYs (Not in My Back Yard), professionals and technicians with poor communication skills, groups defending perceived power and status, or lacking the confidence, skills, or knowledge to participate. How will these be managed?
- Meet the key agencies and lobbies. Get out and network formally and informally. Open new lines of communication. Meet one-to-one when possible to encourage candid responses.
- There are four main groups of participants: politicians; decision makers and resource holders; activists; and ordinary

people. How will you get beyond the (often self-appointed) activists? How will you pro-actively involve hard-to-reach groups?

- Not everyone has an equal stake: build in different levels of involvement for different levels of commitment. Not everyone needs to be involved in every issue at every level and at every stage.
- Help the parties decide how their representatives will relate to their constituencies.
- Research the availability of additional resources. Bring potential funders into the process.
- Get back to the client and gain assent to the process design.

## Agreeing the approach – a strategy

After discussions with the internal client and external interests, you should be able to develop a strategy for the participation process. The precise nature of the strategy will, of course, depend upon circumstances and the level of participation sought with different interests. These issues are dealt with in more detail in the 'How to...' section. Here are some of the main points to cover:

### Strategy checklist

As far as possible gain agreement of all parties to the following:

- The aims of the process and how progress will be evaluated.
- The 'feel' of the process: the style and tone.
- The groupings, forums and decision cycles to be employed.
- Precisely what authority is being delegated to whom.
- The appropriate approaches and techniques, taking into account time scale, objectives, resources, openness of information sharing etc.
- The ground-rules: how are we going to deal with each other?
- The resources available and any conditions attached.
- The technical and administrative services available.
- The mechanisms for recording and disseminating information.
- The level of support and resources to be made available.

Some of these issues may have to evolve with the process: it may not be possible to agree everything at the start. If it seems worth the risk, you may just have to get some action off the ground and work out the details as you go along. You should also:

- Bear in mind that people have limited patience and attention spans: how will you deal with long lead times?
- Be sure everyone understands the constraints: what the process will not achieve for them. Unrealistic expectations can only lead to disillusionment.
- Be realistic about what can be achieved with the time and resources available.

See also items in the A-Z on *Action plans, Budgets for participation, Communication, Workshops*.

## Participation

During this phase you will be running events, producing printed materials and using a range of methods. The *Guidelines on how to...* section and A-Z items provide detailed guidance.

The following are some of tips which emerged from brainstorming sessions with experienced practitioners about this phase of the process:

- Don't underestimate people. Give them tools to manage complexity don't, shield them from it.
- Divide the issues into bite-sized chunks.
- Start with people's own concerns and the issues relevant to them. Don't superimpose your own ideas and solutions at the outset.
- Help people widen their perceptions of the choices available and to clarify the implications of each option.
- Build in visible early successes to develop the confidence of participants. 'Staircase' skills, trust and commitment to the process: offer a progressive range of levels of involvement and help people to move up the ladder.
- Direct empowerment training for participants may not be appreciated – it may be better to develop skills more organically as part of the process.
- If at all possible, avoid going for a comprehensive irreversible solution. Set up an iterative learning process, with small, quick, reversible pilots and experiments.
- Continuously review and widen membership. As new interests groups are discovered how will they be integrated into the process?
- Help people to build their understanding of complex and remote decision processes which are outside the delegated powers of the participation process but which are affecting the outcomes.
- Nurture new networks and alliances.
- Plans must be meaningful and lead to action.
- Manage the link between the private ability of the various interest groups to deliver on their commitments and the public accountability and control of the implementation.
- Build in opportunities for reflection and appraisal.
- Make sure people are having fun!

## Continuation

The final phase in a participation process. By this time it should be clear how any agreed proposals are going to be taken forward. How this is done will depend very much on the level of participation.

At one level – of consultation – you may have worked through some prepared options with different interests and then agreed to take the results away for evaluation and implementation.

At another level – working together – you may be setting up new partnership organisations.

## Postscript

Groups and organisations, like relationships, go through recognisable stages. The early stages have been described as:

- **Forming:** coming together as a group, getting to know each other, deciding what the group's concerns and emphases should be.
- **Storming:** coming to terms with differences within the group.
- **Norming:** agreeing objectives, priorities, procedures, ways of relating to each other.
- **Performing:** getting on with the work, without having to spend a lot of time and energy deciding what needs doing and how it should be done.

All of this is difficult enough in a group which meets frequently, or in a formal organisation. It should be no

### *Final checklist*

- Did we achieve what we set out to do in the process?
- Were the key interests happy with the level of involvement?
- Have we reported back to people on the outcomes?
- Are responsibilities clear for carrying projects forward?
- Are there major lessons we can learn for the next time?

surprise that it is even more complex in a participation process when so many different interests have to find a common vision. Don't be discouraged!

# Signposts from theory to practice

This section sets out how I have designed some of the signposting in this Guide – the cross-references from problems to participation techniques. It is rather theoretical, and if you wish you can skip it and move to the next sections.

## The nature of signposting

The original idea of this guide was to help practitioners who subscribe to the 'why' of participation find their way to the 'how'. In practice signposting is complex for several reasons:

- Every situation is unique.
- Participation methods are not just quick-fix tools for success – they often require skill and experience in their application.
- The methods are not always easy to find – there are not many participation 'toolkits'

For these reasons, this section – and the complementary 'Guidelines on how to...' section – cannot provide a step by step manual. Instead I have tried to offer a number of ways of looking at the route from participation problems to solutions, with some pointers to topics and methods which are detailed in the *A-Z section*.

## The starting point – problems

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***We only think when we are confronted with a problem.***

*John Dewey.*

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Whatever level of participation you are offering, and whatever phase you are in, there will be problems.

- People will not read your leaflets or come to meetings.
  - Colleagues will fail to deliver on their promises.
  - Different interest groups will have conflicting aims.
  - Deadlines will be missed.
  - You may end up as the scapegoat for everyone's difficulties.
- So what do you do when the going gets tough? Reach for a solution – a participation tool or method. You may go and talk to people, produce another piece of paper, run a workshop, set up a committee, or perhaps give someone else the job. The later section on Problems suggests which methods may be most appropriate in common situations. But what do we mean by participation methods?

## The end point – participation methods

The methods for participation included in the guide fall broadly under three headings – techniques, structures and longer-term programmes.

## Techniques

Techniques are frequently used short-term interventions employed by consultants and trainers. They range from communication materials and simple workshop sessions through to more complex methods of decision-making, like Strategic Choice.

They can be very useful ways of concentrating efforts to involve people, but should not be seen as 'quick fixes'. Participation takes time, and techniques should usually be part of a long-term programme, or related to a structure – see below.

## Structures

Both interim and longer-term organisational structures are used in participation processes. They range from working parties and advisory committees to organisations like development trusts, and community-based coops.

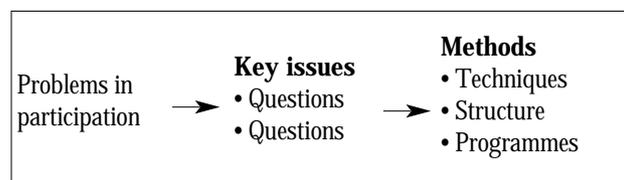
Local councils and similar organisations often favour structures because they mirror or can be linked to their committee systems and the procedures which go with them. They can stand in the way of real participation for those involved unless their purpose is clear, the balance of control or influence is agreed, and their proceedings are enlivened by workshop techniques.

## Longer-term programmes

These are processes for participation, planned over a period of time, which may involve staff devoted partly or wholly to the programme as well as the use of techniques and structures.

## The bridge – key issues

The problems in participation processes seem to relate to about 15 underlying issues. If you can spot the issue, by asking the right questions, you may be able to find a participation method to use. I have listed what I think are the key issues below, with some signposts to methods.



### 1 Taking stock: Situation assessment

- What else is happening which might affect us?
- Who are the key interests?
- What are the barriers to action?
- Who holds the power, and are they prepared to share it?

See CATWOE, Community profiling, Stakeholders, Surveys, SWOT.

## 2 Taking stock: Self assessment

- What do we feel able to do?
- How confident are we?

See *Capacity-building, Skills audit, SWOT*.

## 3 Clarifying purpose, values and vision

- What are we trying to achieve?
- What will it seem like if we succeed?

See *Aims and objectives, Mission, Nominal Group Technique, Outcomes, Purpose, Vision*.

## 4 Roles

- What part am I and others playing in the process?
- What responsibilities do we each have?

See *Accountability, Recruitment, Roles*.

## 5 Increasing commitment

- How can we get people to play an active part?
- Why are people not interested?
- Are my colleagues with me?

See *Apathy, Commitment, Ownership*.

## 6 Communication

- Are we talking the same language?
- Do we understand each other?

See *Communication, Meetings, Presentations*.

## 7 Developing criteria

- What do we think is most important?
- Do we agree on priorities and values?
- How do we use this to choose between different options?

See *Criteria, Evaluation, Values*.

## 8 Negotiation

- How can we reach agreement on what to do and how to do it?

See *Negotiation, Outcomes*.

## 9 Getting resources

- What money, advice and other resources will we need?

See *Fundraising, Resources*.

## 10 Developing skills/capacities

- How will we develop the ability to work with others and achieve what we want?

See *Capacity-building, Skills audit*.

## 11 Generating options

- How can we think creatively to produce a number of different possible options for solutions?

See *Brainstorming, Creative thinking, Ideas, Options, Nominal Group Technique*.

## 1 2 Making decisions

- How can we choose between the different options and work out what to do next?

See *Action plans, Cost/Benefit Analysis, Strategic choice*.

## 1 3 Developing structure

- What type of organisation may we need – either in the short term to make decisions, or in the longer-term to carry out plans?

See *Business planning, Competence, Constitutions, Structures*.

## 1 4 Managing structure

- How will we run any organisation?
- What skills and resources will we need?

See *Competence, Governance, Management*.

## 1 5 Evaluating progress

- How will we judge whether we are succeeding or failing?

See *Criteria, Evaluation*.

## When the issues arise

The set of issues listed above crop up at all phases in the process, but some are more important than others at different points. Similarly, some techniques are important in different phases. The table overleaf illustrates where and when key issues may arise.

# A community participation question set

To ensure a broad, coherent approach to community participation, consider the following:

## 1 Commitment

Has the nature and extent of commitment to participation, amongst all those involved, been made clear at the outset?  
Have major differences been addressed?

## 2 Education for participation

Has some opportunity been provided to ensure some positive 'induction' to the participation process for local people, professionals, elected members and others?

## 3 Applicability

Has it been decided whether, and in what general ways, a participative approach is applicable to all types of specific project or continuing initiative?

## 4 Initiation

Has something been done to ensure that the pattern and detail of participation activity is not determined totally by whoever initiates it? Is there a shared feeling of 'ownership'?

## 5 Scope

Within a general principle of attempting to achieve the fullest possible involvement on any project, are all parties clear about, and do they accept, the level of participation on offer?

## 6 Delivering agreed scope

Are those in positions of power to influence the end outcome (elected members, officers, developers, funders) able to deliver the agreed level of involvement? (If it cannot be delivered, it should not be offered.)

## 7 All Stages

Is participation being started as early as possible in the planning and development process, and how can you make it something which should go right through from initiation to completion (and even into later community management)?

## 8 Defining Overall Community

Have the definitions of 'area' and 'overall community', used to determine who has an opportunity to be involved, been negotiated with all parties, and how will they be redefined if necessary as work proceeds?

## 9 Engaging Communities

Have the ground rules for how the many sub-communities within the area are defined, located and accessed been considered at the outset and agreed with all parties, and how will it be enlarged and extended as work proceeds?

## 10 Approach

Have those managing the involvement process, along with other parties, agreed an overall, coherent approach which ensures that all relevant issues are addressed and which considers the participation process over time?

## 11 Relevant Methods

Have the methods to be used been carefully chosen to relate closely to the scope of the work, the definitions of communities used the stage of the involvement and the available skills and resources?

## 12 Range of methods

In general, is a range of methods to be used in order to increase the chances of engaging the largest number of people?

## 13 Resources

Have all resources available for the work been assessed, considered and valued – including 'work equity' by community groups and others? Is there agreement about how those resources are best disposed throughout the work?

## 14 Management

Through what means will those managing the participation process ensure that the manner in which work is handled creates a sense of trust within the community about the fairness and neutrality of the process?

## 15 Resolution

Has there been consideration at an early stage of the manner in which the many views and ideas emerging from the participation process are assembled, weighted and used in relation to reaching any decisions? In particular, who will do this?

## 16 Going forward

Has thought been given to how practice should be evaluated in retrospect and time given, for all parties, to consider how best to take forward the lessons learned into subsequent involvement activity?  
..... and finally:

## 17 Context

What general support is there from your organisation, is the time right to be doing this, are there any specific 'windows of opportunity' you can use to get things going? Where are the enemies and the barriers likely to come? Can you influence any of these?

*This question set was supplied by consultants BDOR.*

Phases/ levels	Initiation	Preparation – internally
<b>Supporting independent community initiatives</b>	<p>What triggered proposals for support?            What do you want to achieve?            What boundaries are you setting?</p>	<p>Can you set out clearly what you are offering, and who can apply?            Are you being honest about what you want out of it, and how you will judge success?            Who are you particularly aiming to help?            What is the risk of cuts in support?</p>
<b>Acting together</b>	<p>Why do you need to work in partnership with others?            Who has similar concerns?            What skills and resources do you have?            What balance of control do you envisage?</p>	<p>Why should people want to join you?            What resources will you put on offer?            Are people internally prepared to share control with others?</p>
<b>Deciding together</b>	<p>Why do you want to involve other people substantially?            What boundaries are there on what you will/can do?            Who do you see as the other key interests?</p>	<p>How will you and others generate ideas on what to do? Are roles clear?            How open are you about who eventually takes action? Would you move to 'Acting together' if pressed?            Do people agree internally?</p>
<b>Consultation</b>	<p>What prompted the idea of consultation? Are you looking at the real problem?            Are you confident you have have all the answers?</p>	<p>How will you develop the options for consultation, and gain agreement internally?            What will you say about putting proposals into practice?            Will you take people's responses seriously?</p>
<b>Information</b>	<p>What triggered the need to inform people? Who are they?            Will they be satisfied with information-only?            Do you need to overcome past mistrust?</p>	<p>Are key interests within the the organisation agreed on the message and the audience?            Will you accept any feedback?            What methods are appropriate?            How will you know whether the message has got through?</p>

<b>Preparation – with key interests</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Continuation</b>
<p>Do you know what the needs and other interests are? Do you know what support they will need?</p>	<p>Can you provide support for groups setting up their project or organisation? Do you have ways of keeping in touch with what is happening?</p>	<p>Can you provide or recommend support for groups? How will you keep in touch? Do you have agreed monitoring and evaluation methods?</p>
<p>Do you have an appropriate interim structure and methods for deciding/acting together? Are people comfortable together and committed? Do you need to get other people involved?</p>	<p>Can you agree on a joint vision? Do you and others have the skills, resources, structures and commitment to carry it out? Can you produce a development plan?</p>	<p>Is the structure sustainable? Do you have appropriate administrative, training and financial systems?</p>
<p>Have you contacted key interests informally? Are people comfortable and confident to participate on the terms you are offering?</p>	<p>Do you have appropriate methods for making choices together? Do you have an appropriate structure for decisions? Will you implement agreed decisions?</p>	<p>Will you need a continuing input of skills and resources from elsewhere? If so, does that mean moving to 'Acting together'?</p>
<p>Are people likely to accept your options? If not, should you move to deciding or acting together? Will people understand what you are offering?</p>	<p>Are people accepting your options? Is there pressure for more say? Do you need to gain the support of more people? Do you have machinery for analysing the responses?</p>	<p>Are you asking people for continuing feedback? If so, how?</p>
<p>Is the information-only stance likely to be accepted? Will people understand what you are saying?</p>	<p>Is your message getting through? Do people accept it? If not, should you consult or decide/act together on a wider range of options?</p>	<p>How will you keep people informed?</p>

# Guidelines

It is tempting to say that every situation is so different that general guidelines on participation are misleading – but that isn't much comfort to anyone trying to work out how to start. So here are ten principles intended to get you thinking, rather than provide firm rules. Cross references are provided to other main sections and items in the A-Z, and further guidelines on the main tasks are given later. This section – as others – is written for someone managing a participation process.

1 Ask yourself what you wish to achieve from the participation process, and what you want to help others achieve. What is the purpose?

*See A Framework for participation. Beneficiaries, Purpose.*

2 Identify the different interests within a community that you wish to involve, and put yourself in their shoes.

*See Community, Stakeholders.*

3 Clarify your own role and whether you are wearing too many hats – for example, communicator of information, facilitator of ideas, controller of resources.

*See Accountability, Role of the Practitioner.*

4 Consider what balance to strike between keeping control and gaining other people's commitment, and what levels of participation this suggests for different interests.

*See Where do you stand?*

5 Invest as much effort in preparation as participation with outside interests.

*See It takes time, Preparation*

6 Run internal participation processes to make sure your own organisation is committed and can deliver.

*See It takes time, Preparation.*

7 Be open and honest about what you are offering or seeking, and communicate in the language of those you are aiming to involve.

*See Communication, Trust.*

8 Make contact informally with key interests before running any formal meetings.

*See It takes time, Networking, Preparation.*

9 Build on existing organisations and networks – but don't use them as the only channel of communication and involvement.

*See Networking, Voluntary sector.*

10 Consider the time and resources you will need.

*See It takes time.*

# How to ...

This section takes the guidelines above and issues discussed in the more theoretical sections and suggests how to tackle the main tasks likely to crop up in a participation process. It does so by looking at the key issues from a number of angles, providing checklists, and signposting you on to more detail to other sections in the guide and items in the *A-Z section*. However, it should be treated as guidance only – not a step-by-step manual.

## ...clarify why you want to involve others

Why is it necessary to involve other people? Is it for your benefit, theirs, or both?

1 Consider what you are trying to achieve at the end of the day, and why this may be best done with others.

*See Benefits of participation, Barriers to participation, Outcomes.*

2 List the key interests who will have to be involved, both within your organisation and without.

*See Stakeholder analysis.*

3 After following the steps below, try out your ideas informally on a few people you know.

## ...understand your role

Some of the greatest problems arise because those promoting or managing participation are wearing too many different hats.

1 Consider the part you may be expected to play in a participation process:

- Someone who controls resources?
- A go-between?
- A representative of an interest group?
- Some who will initiate, plan or manage the process?
- Someone using participation techniques – producing newsletters, holding meetings, running workshops?

2 If you are trying to do more than one of these, could there be conflicts? How will others see you? Can you split roles with someone else?

3 See earlier sections on *Where do you stand?* and *It takes time* for more detailed descriptions of what is involved in the process.

## ...decide where you stand

One of the most important early decision is on the appropriate level of participation, or stance you will take.

1 Clarify why you want to involve others, and your possible role – see early steps above.

2 Read the *Framework for participation* section, and consider what level of participation is likely to be appropriate:

- Information: telling people what you are going to do.

- Consultation: offering people choices between options you have developed.

- Deciding together: allowing others to contribute ideas and options, and deciding together.

- Acting together: putting your choices into practice in partnership.

- Supporting independent community initiatives: helping others carry out their own plans.

3 Review who the key interests are, and what level of participation will be appropriate for each.

*See Stakeholders.*

## ...prepare for participation

Experienced trainers and facilitators reckon that 80 per cent of the potential for success lies in preparing well before engaging with individuals and groups.

1 See the Preparation section in *It Takes time*. Work through the internal agenda within your organisation. For example:

- Are your colleagues agreed on what they wish to achieve, and the level of participation?
- Have you flushed out any hidden agendas?
- Will the organisation be able to deliver on any promises?

2 Make contact informally with key interests.

- Review the levels of participation different interests may seek.

- Consider the possible obstacles which may occur, and the support you will need.

3 Begin to develop a strategy which covers:

- The main deadlines
- Resources needed
- Technical support available

*See the Signposts section, Budgets for participation, Timeline.*

## ...choose participation methods

The *Easy answers* section outlines what can occur if you don't think through carefully what methods to use.

1 See the *Signposts* section for a theoretical discussion, and pointers to topics and methods featured in the A-Z.

2 In choosing a method consider:

- Is it appropriate for the level of participation? For example, powerful techniques like Planning for Real which give everyone a say are not appropriate for consultation processes where you are really only offering people limited choices.

- Do you have the necessary skills and resources? A slide show may be more effective than a video.

- Can you follow through? There is no point doing a survey unless you can handle the responses and use the information.

- Do you need help? An experienced trainer or facilitator may be necessary for some of the more complex methods.

## ...develop support within your organisation

Many participation processes fail because the organisations promoting the process cannot deliver when others respond.

1 See *It takes time*. After reviewing the issues there and above (in ... prepare for participation):

2 Use internally some of the techniques you plan to use externally:

- Produce communication materials in draft.
- Run workshop sessions.
- Encourage others within the organisation to take ownership of the proposals, options or ideas and work them through informally with other interests. That is the best way to gain internal commitment or discover what problems may arise later.

See *Commitment planning, Ownership*.

## ... and develop your skills as an enabler

Although many of the techniques suggested in this guide are relatively simple, it takes some degree of confidence to run a workshop with community interests for the first time or perhaps argue through with colleagues the need for a long-term participation process. Here are a few suggestions on how to develop your confidence and capability:

- Contact anyone within your organisation, or locally, with facilitation, training or general community development experience and talk through your plans.
- Contact one of the organisations listed in this guide who offer training and support.
- Find a low-risk opportunity to try running a workshop using some of the simpler techniques.
- Or even better run a workshop jointly with an experienced practitioner – perhaps contacted through one of the organisations listed.

## ...choose an appropriate structure

Participation is not necessarily achieved just by setting up a forum, working group, committee, steering group or other structure. On the other hand, if you are planning or managing a participation process you will need some point of accountability, and the key interests may need to work together formally as well as creatively. In planning the process:

- 1 Clarify to whom you are accountable at the outset.
- 2 If you are working at the 'acting together' level of participation help key interests form a working group or steering group when appropriate.
- 3 Review your role and accountability with that new group.

See *items on the structures mentioned, and Accountability, Structures for participation, Terms of reference*.

## Summary

Participation processes do not run on rails, and they cannot be set out as a linear step-by-step process. Each of the items above may be seen as a problem which has to be tackled, but not necessarily solved at one go. Bearing that in mind here is a summary of the main tasks.

### *The main tasks in summary*

1 Clarify why the participation process is being started, who has the final say, and what your brief is.

See *Accountability, Aims and objectives, Mission*.

2 Identify key community interests, including voluntary and community organisations.

See *Community profiling, Networking, Stakeholder analysis*.

3 Consider the level of participation appropriate, make informal contacts to identify local concerns, and whether your stance – the level you are adopting – is likely to be acceptable.

See *Level of participation, Networking*.

4 Run a workshop session(s) within your organisation to ensure key people are clear about the purpose of the participation process, the roles and responsibilities, and the answers to basic questions which will be asked when you go public.

See *Barriers to participation, Change in organisations, Workshops*

5 Consider the stance (Inform, Consult etc) you are taking in more detail, and in the light of that decide on what methods you will use.

See *Levels of participation*

6 Review whether your organisation will be able to respond to the feedback, and follow through on any decisions reached.

See *Change in organisations*

7 Review your timescale, and prepare an action plan based on the level of participation.

See *Action planning*

# An A to Z of participation

**T**his A-Z covers both topics about participation, and some of the techniques which can be used along the way. Because the field is wide, the entries vary, for example:

■ Some entries are self-contained, others are signposts to more detailed sections or further reading.

■ Some techniques relate to the general question of how to approach participation, others deal with situation further down the process when a group or groups are acting together.

Generally the items are written for someone who is starting or managing a participation process, although some should be helpful for anyone seeking to develop groups or organisations.

## Access

If you aim to ensure all sections of the community can be involved in meetings check these possible barriers to participation:

- Timing. Is this convenient?
- Place. Do people feel comfortable about the venue?
- Child care responsibilities. Should a crèche be arranged?
- Age. Should you go to meet children, young people, older people at schools, clubs etc – rather than expect them to come to your meetings?
- Formality and literacy. Will people be put off by the style of meetings and expectation of high levels of literacy and confidence?
- Cultural/racial issues. Should literature be translated? What cultural factors might be relevant to the timing and place of meetings, and provision of refreshments?
- Disability. Is the building accessible to people with disabilities? Should a signer be provided at meetings?
- Poverty. Should expenses be paid in some instances? Can you reassure people they won't asked to put their hands in their pockets?

Access is more than making it easy to meet or understand materials. For example do 'community leaders' reflect the interests of those they may claim to represent?

See also *Cliques, Equal opportunities, Listening, Special Events, Starting where people are at.*

## Accountability

**The lowest level of Government is the individual.**

As people become involved and take a lead during participation processes, there may be questions about who they represent – and to whom they are accountable. Being accountable in an organisation means being answerable to those who give authority or responsibility – more senior staff, a management committee, members or perhaps funders.

When there is no formal organisational structure, accountability issues may be handled by clarifying roles and setting up temporary structures when you need to make decisions and take action. This a key issue for the practitioner managing a participation process.

See also *CATWOE, Leadership, Role of the*

### Accountability checklist

In order to clarify your accountability consider:

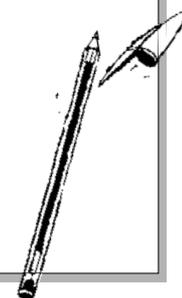
- Who can stop you doing something – or whose permission do you have to ask. When and why?
- How would you describe the part you are playing?
- Who will be affected by your actions, and what is their attitude likely to be?
- What authority do you feel other people should have in order to make decisions and take action?

*practitioner, Stakeholders.*

## Acting together

The level of participation of Acting Together may involve short-term collaboration or forming more permanent partnerships with other interests. It is appropriate:

- When one party cannot achieve what they want on their own.
- The various interests involved all get some extra benefit from Acting Together.
- There is commitment to the time and effort needed to develop a partnership.



## Action planning

After meetings draw up an action plan showing:

- The action or task (what are we trying to do)
- What has to be done first and by when.
- What has to be done second, third etc.
- Who is responsible.
- What resources of information, money, equipment, etc may be needed.
- How will you know you have achieved it – the criteria for success.

Action	By when?	Who?	Resources	Success criteria
1st task	By when?	By whom?	Money, tools?	OK because
2nd task	By when?	By whom?	Money, tools?	OK because
3rd task	By when?	By whom?	Money, tools?	OK because

Choose a different level if:

- One party holds all the power and resources and uses this to impose its own solutions (consider Information or Consultation).
- The commitment to partnership is only skin deep (consider Information or Consultation).
- People want to have a say in making decisions, but not a long term stake in carrying out solutions (consider Deciding Together).

See the section on *Where do you stand?* for more detail.

## Action plans

**Ideas won't keep, something must be done about them.**

*Alfred North Whitehead.*

Action plans provide the answer to the question 'what do we do next?' They are 'to do' lists covering the what, who and when of next steps, and should be the result of workshops or other meetings where you make decisions during a participation process.

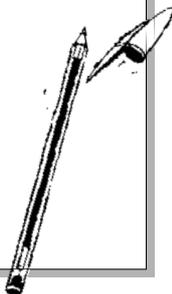
## Activists

**It is a general error to imagine the loudest complainers for the public to be the most anxious for its welfare.**

*Edmund Burke.*

Activists are people who are actively involved in projects in their community, perhaps as volunteer workers or members of committees. Without their commitment little would be achieved. However, participation processes limited only to activists are unlikely to be representative or 'empowering': it is those who are not activists who need greatest support to become involved and achieve what they want.

See also *Access, Cliques, Community leaders, Empowerment.*



## Administrative systems

**I must create a system, or be enslaved by another man's.**

*William Blake*

Blake probably had something grander in mind than filling a filing cabinet, but the principle applies. If you are working with any organisational structure, whether temporary or permanent, during the participation process you will need an administrative system which will involve some or all of the following:

- A card index box or database for contacts.
- A diary.
- Correspondence between members of the group, officials, funders, consultants etc.
- Minutes of meetings and action lists.
- Plans and proposals.
- Reference material.
- A filing system.

Without some sort of system you can't find the information you need, maintain agreement on what has been agreed, work effectively with other interests.

See also *Information systems*

## Advertising

**Advertising is what you do when you can't go to see somebody.**

*Fairfax Cone*

The advantage of advertising when seeking to inform or involve people is that you completely control what and when your message appears. In addition a community newspaper will be grateful for revenue from advertising, and it opens up more local contacts.

The task of producing an effective advertisement will certainly help clarify what you are trying to achieve.

On the other hand advertisements, on their own, can appear over-formal and inflexible and are best used with other communication methods.

See also *Communication, Media, Networking.*

## Agenda

**It might be termed the Law of Triviality. Briefly stated, it means that the time spent on any item of the agenda will be in inverse proportion to the sum involved.**

*C. Northcote Parkinson.*

The agenda tells everyone what is to be discussed at a meeting. It may also be used to describe the course of action someone is planning, but not disclosing – the hidden agenda. If you suspect that is the case, the key question is 'What are we trying to achieve?'

## Agenda formation

In order to decide as a group what to cover in a meeting and, hopefully, disprove Parkinson's Law:

- 1 Prepare large pieces of paper labelled 'Content', 'Format', 'Practical details'.
- 2 Ask everyone to write items on Post-it notes and stick them to the appropriate sheet. Use prompts like:
  - What wouldn't you like missed from the meeting?
  - How will we run the discussion and make decisions?
  - What items require most discussion?
  - Will we need refreshments, a crèche?
- 3 Discuss the items and develop a consensus. Draw up the agenda, and keep the charts to check back after the meeting that people's expectations were met.

See also *Aims and objectives, Outcomes.*

## Aims and objectives

'Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?'  
'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the cat.  
'I don't much care where –', said Alice.  
'Then it doesn't matter which way you go', said the cat.

*Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll.*

Aims are a written description of what a group or organisation is trying to achieve, and the objectives are the methods by which they may do that. Aims and objectives are equally important in participation process: without them you don't know where you will end up. In dealing with group aims and objectives, don't forget that people have personal aims –

### Clarifying aims and objectives

In order to clarify aims and objectives within a group:

- 1 Ask each group member to write a short statement completing the sentence 'this organisation exists to ...', read them out and record them on a chart.
- 2 Discuss differences and agree a joint statement.
- 3 Break the agreed aim into components and develop ideas for achieving each of these. Find common themes – these are the objectives or goals.
- 4 List what could be done to achieve each objective – the working methods.
- 5 Prioritise these and turn them into an action plan stating exactly what will be done by when.

Summarised from *Getting Organised*. The book *Planning Together* provides detailed advice on clarifying aims and planning group activity.

making new friends, getting out of the house, developing new skills – and it is important to acknowledge these, too.

See also *Mission, Purpose, Vision.*

## Allies

It is well worth investing time with people who:

- Can provide personal support and act as a sounding board.
- Have experience of participation you can draw on.
- Can offer specialist knowledge and advice.
- Know the area well.

You may find allies among, for example, local groups, voluntary organisations, local councillors, colleges or universities running relevant courses.

See also *Community, Research, Stakeholders.*

## Analogy

Being able to say 'it's like so and so' is a useful way of helping people understand what you are getting at, because you are then sharing the same 'mental map'. ('Mental map' is itself an analogy). Many of the quotations in this guide work through analogy or metaphor. Analogies may also be helpful in understanding a participation process, for example:

- Sport. Is it a level playing field for all involved? What are the rules? Who are the players and who are the spectators?
- A journey. Where are we now? Where are we trying to get to? What are the barriers?
- Cooking. What are the recipes for success? Are you running a restaurant – or helping people cook for themselves?

See also *Process as a journey.*

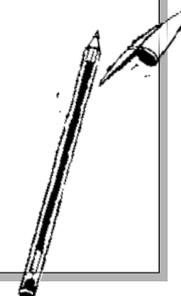
## Apathy

**What makes life dreary is want of motive.**

*George Eliot.*

Apathy is the state of those people who don't want to get involved in what you are offering. Are they apathetic – or perhaps just not interested in the same issues you are? People have a right to decide their own interests and purpose, and their own level of participation. There's a fine line between creating awareness and telling people what they should have or do. What appears to be apathy may also be anxiety about becoming involved in something new and uncertain.

See also *Access, Awareness, Barriers to participation, Commitment, Empowerment, Level of participation, Ownership, Purpose.*



## Approach

There is much truth in the suggestion, which I have often heard, that effective participation is more about approach than technique. If you put yourself in other people's shoes, start where they are at, are open and honest, and avoid jargon, you should go a long way to gain people's involvement. On the other hand all the techniques in the world will not overcome distrust and antipathy caused by a 'we know best' approach.

See also *Attitudes*.

## Assessment

One of the first things to do in the early stages of a participation process is take stock of yourself and the situation. A good way to do this is to run a SWOT analysis and to do a Stakeholder analysis. More formally you may wish to undertake Community profiling, or Surveys.

See also *Parish Maps and Village Appraisals*.

## Attitudes

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**Belief is harder to shake than knowledge.**

*Adolph Hitler.*

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Some of the main barriers to participation lie in the attitudes people bring to the process. Residents may lack confidence or feel action is not their responsibility. Officials may see getting the job done quickly as a top priority, even if it doesn't meet the needs of all concerned. Councillors may feel their power is eroded by sharing decision making with local people. Some of these attitudes are deeply rooted in people's self esteem or concerns about status, and will only change through a long process of personal development.

Techniques which draw out the underlying concerns and priorities of the different interests may help.

See also *Change, Commitment, Ownership and Stakeholders*.

## Awareness

For people to become involved in any process or project they need to be aware it is happening, see some benefit or relevance to themselves, and feel confident about their role.

The three are closely linked – attempts to raise people's awareness will be more successful if they start by considering the interests of the audience, and what will be a comfortable way for people to respond. Start where people are – value their knowledge and experience.

Advertising, leaflets, videos and exhibitions all have a part to play. Networking and personal

contact may be more effective, particularly used with workshops techniques. Newcastle Architecture Workshop has produced a techniques pack *Awareness Through to Action*.

See also *Parish Maps, Starting where people are at, and Village Appraisals*.

## Barriers to participation

When 10 people turn up to a public meeting which has been advertised for weeks the organisers blame apathy. However, people may be reluctant to get involved for all sorts of reasons:

- Cynicism
- Anxiety about the sort of meeting it will be
- Feeling they wouldn't be effective in any programme anyway
- Not wanting to fuss
- Experience of failure
- Low self-esteem

The book *Limbering up* offers a more detailed study of barriers. A good way to start planning a participation process is to throw up all the possible barriers you can think of, then work out how to overcome them.

See also *Access, Equal opportunities*.

## Benefits of participation

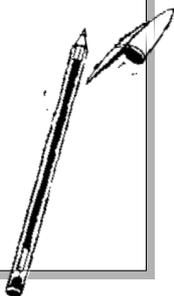
The benefits – and problems – of participation will be seen differently by the various interests involved. However, the general benefits often claimed include:

- People who feel they have a say are more likely to be positive about proposals.
- Fresh ideas may emerge.
- You may get help in kind or other resources.
- People are far more likely to be part of a long-term solution if they have some ownership of the early ideas.
- Involvement on one project or programme builds understand, trust and confidence which may be important on other occasions.

Besides these benefits of a better 'product' or outcome are the 'process' issues of helping develop people's confidence and skills. Benefits are most likely for all concerned when:

- The main interests agree on the appropriate level of participation.
- There is a common language to discuss issues and develop ideas.
- Appropriate methods are used to get as much agreement as possible on desired outcomes.

See also *Capacity building, Empowerment*.



## Bottom up and top down

A term frequently used to distinguish change or activity among community interests (bottom up) from that in government (top down). Effective participation is likely to require both.

## Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one of the most widely used – and misused – aids to creative thinking. It was devised during the 1930s by Alex Gordon, working in an advertising agency in New York, and is defined as ‘a means of getting a large number of ideas from a group of people in a short time’. It should not be used as a label for any loosely-structured session where a group rambles around a problem in the hope of striking a solution. The guidelines for brainstorming are:

- Suspend judgement – don’t censor ideas.
- Free-wheel to drift around the problem.
- Aim for quantity of ideas regardless of quality.
- Cross-fertilise between ideas.

See also *Nominal Group Technique* which offers an alternative to brainstorming.

## Budgeting for participation

Effective participation takes time and money. The resources you need will depend on the level of participation. You may need funds or help in kind for:

- Surveys.
- Communication materials – anything from leaflets to a video or exhibition.
- Meetings and workshops, perhaps including the cost of a facilitator.
- The costs of an on-the-ground presence, perhaps a temporary office or shop front.
- Training.
- Start up costs if you are setting up a new organisation.

## Business planning

Any organisation created during a participation process which aims to keep going in the long term needs a business or development plan. For a voluntary or non-profit organisation the plan will balance the costs and income of three parts of its operation: the projects, products or services provided by the organisation; the core staff, premises and equipment; and any fund raising.

The business plan should cover at least three years and show how fund raising and any income earned covers the core costs.

## Brainstorming

After you have defined the problem or question follow these steps. A group of more than five and less than 20 is best:

- Throw up every idea you can. Don’t discuss the ideas and don’t reject any – even if they are far-fetched.
- As the ideas come up record them on a list everyone can see. One idea may spark off another.
- When the ideas have dried up, cross off those everyone agrees are ludicrous.
- Look for common themes and possible solutions.

## Campaigns

Although campaigns may bring to mind banner-waving protesters, the term is also used to describe ‘any programme or series of actions instituted by one group of people with the aim of achieving a change in resources, or in the form of an organisation, or in a decision-making process, over which another group or groups of people have considerable control’ when this is a bottom-up process (Christine Flecknoe).

A campaign by local people to create, for example, a playground, could involve information-gathering, surveys, public meetings, exhibitions, festivals, lobbying, meetings with officials and many other activities.

Campaigns are dynamic – they respond to events. As such they cannot be steered ‘top-down.’ If you are initiating a participating process you may have to deal with campaigns which target your own organisation. If that feels uncomfortable, consider:

- Is your stance appropriate? People may feel they should have more influence.
- Are you clear about your role? Are you wearing too many hats: go-between, facilitator at meetings, someone who controls resources?
- Have you spent enough time working through issues within your organisation?

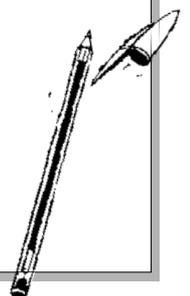
See also *Role of the practitioner, Stance*.

## Capacity-building

**I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.**

*Chinese proverb.*

Capacity-building is training and other methods to help people develop the confidence and skills necessary for them to achieve their purpose. The capacity people need depends both on their abilities and on the situation they face. You may feel capable of tackling one thing, yet feel completely differently about another task. For example, parents of young children campaigning for a play group might



feel ill-equipped to write a technical report to a council committee. But how many chief executives could run a children's tea party? The most effective capacity building is likely to be through 'learning by doing' rather than formal training courses.

### Capacity building

In order to explore where a group lacks confidence and skills ask members to:

- 1 Write down what they would like to do but don't feel up to
- 2 Explain why they want to do it, and why they don't feel up to it
- 3 Write down the opposite of the reasons
- 4 Consider what would help them start feeling any of these things
- 5 Think of some practical actions they might take

Summarised from Limbering Up

See also *Confidence, Skills audit.*

### Case studies

A case study is a structured description of a project or organisation. If you are creating an organisation, reading case studies may give you ideas for your own, although similarities may be difficult to see unless the case study is 'unpacked' around key issues. One way to clarify what you are trying to achieve is to try and write a case study of your own project as it might appear in a few years time. The checklist give you a possible structure for this.

#### Case study checklist

- Name, address, staff.
- Area of operation and date of formation.
- Aims and objectives.
- Legal status, management structure, membership.
- Source of funds
- Products, services, methods, activities.
- Outcome measures and summary of major achievements.
- Relationships with other organisations.

### CATWOE

CATWOE is a mnemonic from Operational Research which helps clarify a situation or review a process: see the box for its use.

### Change

**The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends upon the unreasonable man.**

*George Bernard Shaw.*

Change is at the heart of all processes of

### Using CATWOE

1 Use CATWOE to help identify the different elements:

- Customers – who are the victims/beneficiaries of the activities?
- Actors– who does the activities?
- Transformations – what things change as a result of the activities and what do they change into?
- World View– what views of the purpose of the activities are possible?
- Owners– who can stop the activities?
- Environment – what constraints (rules, roles, outside bodies, etc.) exist which might restrict the activities?

2 Brainstorm lists on charts under each of the headings.

3 Use the lists under Customers, Actors, Owners and elements of the Environment as a start for stakeholder analysis.

4 Use Transformations to prompt further thinking about information and resource needs, monitoring and evaluation.

5 Use World View to identify groups of stakeholders, and to start discussion of Building an image.

6 Use Owners and Environment as a start to thinking about barriers.

participation and partnership. It is more of a balance of changing the world and changing yourself than Shaw professes. For example:

- Changing one's attitudes in order to see the other person's point of view.
- Developing new skills.
- Developing trust.
- Increasing confidence.
- The physical and organisation change of developing a project.

Many of the techniques featured in this guide are tools for change.

### Change in organisations

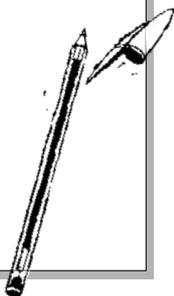
Many problems in participation processes arise because front-line staff are not backed up by colleagues in their organisation. However, any strategy for change will need the commitment of top-level management, co-ordination, and communication both inside and outside the authority.

Change is likely to produce resistance, and it is easy to blame 'the community' for problems which lie elsewhere.

See the sections *It takes time*, *Guidelines on how to...* See also *Force field analysis.*

### Charitable company

This is an organisational structure which combines the advantages of a company (clear structure, limited liability) with charitable



status (tax and fund-raising benefits). The appropriate legal form is a company limited by guarantee, where the members of the Board are not paid, and the objects are charitable. There are disadvantages of charitable status – see below.

See also *Charitable status, Companies*.

## Charitable status

If an organisation is being created as part of the participation process, the issue of whether to seek charitable status may arise. A charity is not a particular form of organisation, different from a company or community group. Both may be charities, if they are accepted and registered as such by the Charity Commissioners. (In Scotland and Northern Ireland registration is directly with the Inland Revenue.)

To be registered as a charity an organisation must restrict its activities exclusively to one or more of the following objects:

- The relief of poverty.
- The advancement of religion.
- The advancement of education.
- Other purposes beneficial to the community.

The benefits of charitable status include exemption from corporation tax, capital gains, capital transfer tax, and at least 50% of the business rate or council tax. The VAT concessions are limited.

Charitable status adds credibility to an organisation and enables it to apply to large charities for funding. In general charities can only make gifts to other charities. The greatest disadvantage of charitable status is that it restricts the political and campaigning activity of an organisation.

On another front, if any income generating activity is not directly in support of the organisation's charitable objects it may be necessary to create an associated trading company. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations provides advice on charitable status.

## Charts

These may be flip charts – pads of large paper used with an easel – or simply lining paper tacked to the wall. Either way they are essential for creative thinking in groups. Committees need agendas and minutes – workshops need charts. In using charts:

- Use blutack or some other method to stick charts up as you write them, so people can see early work.
- Offer the pen to others in the group.

- Don't lose the work at the end of the session  
Taking photographs of the charts is an easy way of keeping a record.

## Cliques

**Twenty per cent of the people in volunteer groups do ninety per cent of the work.**

*The Diamond of Psi Upsilon*

A clique is a small number of people seen by others to be acting together to exclude them from discussion or decisions. The members of the clique may see themselves as over-worked and the only ones who care about the group or organisation. Whoever is right (and it may be both), cliques can be a significant barriers to wider involvement.

The clique would benefit from delegation and recruitment of other people to help. It may be possible to raise these issues at the start of a new project or participation process, run some workshops, and develop a new working group or steering group.

See items on the above issues for further discussion.

## Commitment

Commitment is the opposite of apathy, and is most likely when people can see some point in being involved. A cynical view is that people become interested when you can answer the question: What's in it for me? However, people do become involved for a wide range of reasons which go beyond personal gain – for example sociability, and feeling they are doing something worthwhile.

The only way you can discover people's interests is by talking to them – which means networking and running workshops. Surveys may give you some starting points, but you won't gain people's commitment by quoting statistics at them. Before seeking commitment from community interests it is important to ensure you have the internal commitment of colleagues within your own organisation. This is dealt with at more length in the section *It takes time*.

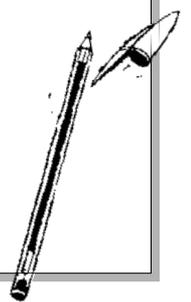
See also *Apathy, Attitudes, Networking, Ownership, Values*.

### Increasing commitment

List the key interests when you feel you understand their main concerns. Put a \* where you think they are and a + where you want them to be, in relation to your interests. The object of the exercise is to try to move them to the right. For example, on a project you might find:

Who	Against	Neutral	Support	Actively Supports
Neighbours		*	+	
Councillors	*		+	
Officers		*		+

In order to make the moves, think through why they are taking their current position, what benefits there would be for them to change, and how you might bring this home to them.



## Committees

**What is a committee? A group of the unwilling, picked from the unfit, to do the unnecessary.**

*Richard Harkness.*

Committees are meetings with an order of business (the agenda) some agreed procedures and officers (chair, secretary) and records (minutes). They range from management committees, acting as a governing body, to sub-committees that may meet as and when necessary.

Committees are necessary to make formal decisions, but they are not appropriate for more creative activities like brainstorming, which are best done in focus groups and workshops.

The committee may simply take time out to break into small groups. It may be appropriate to follow a substantial creative session with a more formal committee meeting to endorse the action plan.

### Committee checklist

In order to improve your committee meetings, get members to agree to:

- Read papers beforehand and bring them to the meeting.
- Check what they don't understand and find out any background.
- Turn up at the right time.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Listen to other people and consider their views.
- Think before speaking.
- Seek decisions on which all can agree.
- Record what needs to be done.
- Read the action minutes and take any action necessary.
- Report back on action taken.

*See other items on the issues mentioned for further discussion.*

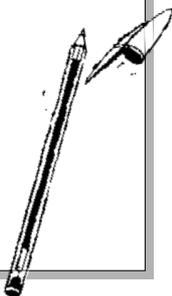
## Communication

**The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.**

*Sydney J. Harris*

Communication should be seen as a two-way process of sending and receiving messages, and as such the basis for all participation. Effective communication involves considering how your message will be received as well as how you send it: the meaning of any communication is the response you get.

This meaning is influenced by how people see and judge you – their attitude – as well as the content of your message and the method you use. For that reason face to face may be more effective than glossy brochures or videos.



The obvious barriers to communication are:

- Lack of clarity about what you want to get across.
- Jargon.
- Hostility to you or your organisation.
- Lack of credibility in the message or the person giving it.

### Communication checklist

In planning your communication, have you:

- Clarified what you want to get across?
- Identified your audience, and their likely interests?
- Considered what response you want ?
- Reviewed what materials, events or media would be most appropriate?
- Planned how to deal with responses?

*See also Special events, Media, Presentations, Print, Vision.*

## Community

**Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.**

*George Bernard Shaw*

Community is a term so widely applied that it is in danger of losing any meaning, like 'members of the public'. Aren't we all? At worst it may be used by officials to mean anyone who is not 'us' – an undifferentiated mass of activists, organisations and uninvolved residents. Marilyn Taylor, in *Signposts to Community Development*, suggests it is more useful to think of a large number of over-lapping communities distinguished by the characteristics of their members, and the common interests which tie members together and give these characteristics a shared significance. The characteristics might be, for example:

- Personal (age, gender, ethnicity).
- Beliefs.
- Economic status.
- Activities.
- Services provided or used.
- Place.

Common characteristics do not necessarily mean people identify with each other as a community. The factors which give these characteristics a shared meaning are a cultural heritage, social relationships, common economic interests, or the basis for political power. Communities may be short or long term.

Because individuals may belong to many different communities at the same time, different allegiances may people pull in different directions. There are likely to be

competing and conflicting interests within communities.

See also *items below and Research, Stakeholders.*

## Community architecture and planning

Professionals working within community architecture and planning apply community development methods in the built environment. They often work from or with community technical aid centres and see the community group or organisation as their client, even though they may be funded from charitable or public sources.

For typical techniques see *Design Games and Planning for Real*. Newcastle Architecture Workshop has produced a techniques pack *Awareness Through to Action*.

## Community Businesses and Co-operatives

These are trading organisations which aim to combine local control, the creation of viable jobs for local people and financial sustainability. Community coops are controlled by the workers, community businesses are likely to have community representation on their management committees.

## Community development

'Community development is concerned with change and growth – with giving people more power over the changes that are taking place around them, the policies that affect them and the services they use'. (Marilyn Taylor, *Signposts to Community Development*).

As such it is relevant to all levels of participation. It seeks to 'enable individuals and communities to grow and change according to their own needs and priorities' (Standing Conference on Community Development) rather than those dictated by circumstances beyond their boundaries. It works through bringing people together to 'share skills, knowledge and experience.'

See also *Community development methods*.

## Community development methods

The methods used within community development will be particularly relevant to participation processes which seek to empower community interests. Marilyn Taylor in *Signposts to Community Development* lists the following main methods:

■ Profiling and policy analysis. Developing a community profile and analysing policies –

local, national, international – as they effect the community.

- Capacity building: training people in the skills that they need to achieve their goals.
- Organising by building sustainable and accessible organisations around issues that are defined by the community as important.
- Networking to build links between organisations where this can help to achieve objectives.
- Resourcing groups by linking them to outside resources and expertise.
- Negotiating to encourage service providers to adopt a community development approach, and assist people and groups in the community in their relationships with service providers and policy makers.

## Community forum

A community forum is regular meeting of community activists and interest groups which may also involve local business, political, religious and social organisations. It may be useful for discussion of issues of concern to local interests, and for stimulating contacts and networking. A forum is not so good for turning discussion into action, where some complementary 'do it' organisation like a Development Trust may be needed.

### Setting up a community forum

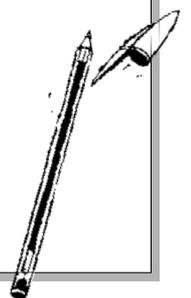
If you are setting up a forum:

- Ensure membership is as wide as possible, and avoid domination by any one interest group
- Consider splitting meetings into small groups and using workshop techniques so people have more chance to contribute.
- Seek an independent widely-respected chair
- Make any servicing of the forum - developing agendas, recording discussion - as independent as possible.
- Don't make the forum the only channel for consultation or decision-making.

See also *Networking, Structures*.

## Community initiatives

A project or organisation where the impetus and control lies with community interests. Examples of organisations are community businesses and community co-operatives. Organisations like community technical aid centres, community trusts and development trusts may aim to serve community interests, but be controlled by governing bodies with a mix of community, public and private sector representation. Rather than attempting to categorise organisations as 'community' or not



solely on the basis of membership, it may be useful to consider:

- What is the organisation seeking to achieve, and who sets those objectives?
- Who benefits from its activities?
- Where does the money come from?
- Where does control lie?

See also *Community*.

## Community leaders

The term 'community leaders' has been favoured by some politicians perhaps unwilling to come to terms with the range and complexity of interests within any community. It is much easier to think there are a few people to talk to than engage in complex participation processes. But to challenge that idea doesn't mean that individuals within any community of interest cannot take a leadership role.

See also *Accountability, Activists, Community, Leadership*.

## Community Operational Research

Operational research, or OR, has been used extensively in large commercial, industrial and service enterprises to assist problem solving and decision making. Community OR is different from traditional OR in style rather than content, in that it works with groups that usually have participative decision-making, a general suspicion of experts and need to operate on small budgets and voluntary time. For OR techniques which have been used with community and voluntary groups see SAST, SSM, Strategic choice. Contact the Community Operational Research Unit for further information.

## Community planning weekends

This technique is based on the Urban Design Assistance Teams which originated in the United States. A multi-disciplinary team of professionals, community representatives and statutory authorities come together for several days to develop a strategy or master plan for an area. If well planned there will be:

- Considerable preparation through research, surveys and workshops with interested groups.
- Site visits.
- Facilitated workshops using a range of techniques during the weekend.
- A report covering physical design, finance, organisational structure and development process.



- Arrangements for public report backs and further community involvement.

## Community profiling

Community profiling is a social, environmental and economic description of an area which is used to inform local decision-making. The pack produced by the School for Advanced Urban Studies offers a 10-step approach which deals with how to form a group to undertake the profile, gather and analyse data, present it, and use the results for planning action.

See also *Parish Maps, Village Appraisals*.

## Community technical aid centres

Community technical aid centres are non-profit-distributing organisations that offer design, planning and other professional services to community groups. They take a community development approach, and some are controlled by their user groups. The Association of Community Technical Aid Centres will provide more information.

## Community Trusts

Community Trusts are independent fund-raising and grant-making charitable trusts which serve a specific geographical area. If there is one in your area, they may be a useful source of information about community needs in the area, and may support community initiatives.

Community trusts raise funds from a wide range of sources, especially those previously untapped, with the aim of establishing an endowment fund. Interest from this large sum of capital is used for grant-making in the area. Community Trusts should not be confused with community development trusts (see Development trusts) which are geared towards economic and environmental practical action. The Association for Community trusts and Foundations will provide more information.

## Companies

A particular form of company, the company limited by guarantee, is increasingly popular as an organisational structure for larger community initiatives and partnerships. Companies limited by guarantee do not have shareholders – instead their members agree to pay a nominal sum, often only £1, if the company fails. The rights of these members to appoint members of the governing body – the Board – are defined by the constitution – the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The company does not distribute surpluses as profits, but reinvests them in the company. If

the members of the Board are unpaid, and the company has appropriate objects, it can seek charitable status.

Development Trusts are usually companies limited by guarantee, as are many voluntary organisations. Companies limited by guarantee are also appropriate for partnership organisations with Board representatives from public, private and community sectors.

See *Voluntary but Not Amateur, and Just About Managing?* for more information on companies. See also *Constitution*.

## Competence

Being competent means being able to say 'I know' and 'I can'. There is a sophisticated system of National Vocational Qualifications which classifies the competences appropriate to different jobs. Less formally you can consider what competences will be needed for any project or organisation you may be developing, both as a whole and for each role involved. Then carry out a skills audit to find how far you have the capacity to do what's needed.

See also *Capacity-building, Roles*.

## Confidence

**They are able who think they are able.**

*Virgil.*

One of the major barriers to people's involvement is lack of confidence in joining in activities, groups or organisations which may be unfamiliar. In order to help:

- Suggest that people who are already involved bring along people they know.
- Run social events where people can get to know each other.
- If you must have formal public meetings run them towards the end of a process – otherwise they can be intimidating.
- Concentrate on workshops where everyone can have a say.
- Carry out a skills and experience audits to help people understand they have more capabilities than they may have thought.
- Tackle some projects which enable people to use their skills and provide early success.

See also *Capacity-building*.

## Conflict Resolution

**One fifth of the people are against everything all the time.**

*Robert F. Kennedy.*

Within any participation process there are likely to be conflicts because of people's underlying attitudes, the outcomes they are

seeking, and the values they hold. The processes to resolve conflicts include consensus building, mediation and negotiation.

*Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* suggests that for successful conflict resolution the following elements seem to be necessary:

- Enough time to deal with the conflict.
- Defining the problem in terms which are clear and acceptable to all.
- Dealing with negative feelings in positive ways.
- Helping people identify in concrete terms what makes them unhappy with the situation – distinguishing between feelings and reality.
- For each member of the conflict to identify their real needs.
- An opportunity for individuals to unload feelings of hurt, fear etc in the presence of accepting people.
- To have at least one person – preferably uninvolved – to give special attention to the process.

See the books *Constructive Conflict management, Getting to Yes, and material on the Resolve programme from the Environment Council*. See also *Consensus-building*.

## Consensus-building

Consensus building is a participation process where participants work together to try and reach a result which has benefits for both – a win/win outcome. It is an alternative to adversarial confrontation where one side is trying to gain supremacy – win/lose – or a compromise which neither side achieves what they want – lose/lose.

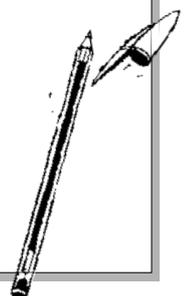
The Environment Council runs a Resolve programme of consensus building and has published an Action Pack by Andrew Floyer Acland. The key elements of the process are:

- A commitment of the parties to investing time and effort in interactive co-operation.
- Involving the participants in designing a staged process for consensus-building – and changing it if it isn't working.
- Using the process to develop relationships so the consensus is sustained.

### Consensus in a group

In order to help a large group make a decision:

- 1 The whole group defines the problem.
- 2 The whole group Brainstorms possible solutions, and identifies several for investigation.
- 3 The large group breaks into small groups, which review the problem and develop more detailed solutions.
- 4 Report back, look for consensus, identify remaining issues, repeat the process if necessary.



- Exploring future needs and interests – not taking abstract positions.
- Helping participants understand each other's point of view.
- Testing options for agreement for the impact on every party.

## Constitutions

As soon as any group seeks to take on a substantial project, it will need mechanisms for making decisions, defining roles and possibly raising funds and employing staff. A constitution is the document which sets out the rules for governing any organisation. It is necessary in order to:

- Ensure the organisation's aims are clear and agreed by members.
- Provide formal mechanisms for making decisions and resolving disputes.
- Clarify responsibilities and ensure accountability.
- Increase credibility with funders.
- Enable the organisation to apply for charitable status (if it wishes to).
- Register as a friendly society, industrial and provident society or company limited by guarantee.

The constitution provides a reference for these issues – but it doesn't solve them on its own. It can be far more productive to run some team-building and problem solving workshops than pick over the niceties of the constitution – provided legal requirements are always fulfilled.

Organisations may be unincorporated, in which case they have no separate legal existence, and are a collection of individuals, or incorporated as a separate entity, where the liability of individuals may be limited.

*See Voluntary But Not Amateur for guidance on constitutions. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations provides advice.*

## Consultants

**A consultant is someone who borrows your watch to tell you the time, and charges you by the minute to do it.**

This quotation is, of course, a completely unfair view of consultants. Or is it? There are broadly two types of consultants, 'expert' consultants and 'process' consultants.

Expert consultants are appropriate when you have defined a problem which requires the application of knowledge and skills which you don't possess and, for whatever reason, don't wish to acquire. The success of the consultancy depends on getting the problem right, choosing the appropriate consultant, briefing them well,

providing information, accepting their recommendations, and being able to put them into practice. It doesn't work if you won't take the remedy – or what you need is more like therapy.

The process consultant is appropriate when the solution really lies with you, but you haven't worked out what it is, or don't have the confidence. The consultant's skill lies in asking the right questions and getting you to think through and apply the answers. It works if you work at it, and should be an empowering experience.

Process consultants often take a training approach, and can be useful in helping design and run participation processes. Beware of any consultants who offer quick fixes – see the section *Easy answers*.

*See also Facilitation.*

## Consultation

Consultation is the level of participation at which people are offered some choices on what is to happen, but are not involved in developing additional options. It is appropriate where, for example:

- An authority or organisation aims to improve a service.
- There is a clear vision or plan for a project, and limited ways of carrying it through. Choose a different level – indicated in brackets – if:
- Your decision won't be changed by what people say (information).
- You are not clear what you wish to do and are seeking ideas (Deciding together).
- You don't have the resources or skills to carry out the options presented (Acting Together).

*For more detail see the section Where do you stand?*

## Continuation

Continuation is the final phase of the participation process described in the section *It takes time*. Activities in this phase will depend in the level of participation. For example, on a consultation process tasks may include analysing and reporting back on responses; in a partnership-building process – acting together – a new organisation may be formed.

## Control

Control in a participation process is determined by the extent to which any organisation or interest group can influence the outcome of the process. Different levels of participation reflect different levels of control: an organisation



taking an information or consultation stance is retaining control, while one acting with others or supporting community initiatives will inevitably have less control. For this reason organisations – and often politicians – will stick to ‘lower’ levels of participation. The disadvantages of this approach are:

- People are less likely to become involved or to put in time, ideas and effort.
- The controlling interest will be expected to find all the resources.
- The process is unlikely to increase the capacity of community interests to undertake any projects of their own.

Instead of thinking about control and ‘power over’ others, it is generally more helpful to think about ‘power to’ achieve what you wish.

See also *Consensus building, Empowerment, Outcomes, Power.*

## Cost/benefit analysis

A complex technique which in a simple form can be useful as a way of deciding between different options. See the box opposite.

## Creative thinking

Creative thinking involves developing ideas and options for action which aren’t obvious. It is best done in workshops rather than committees. Techniques for creative thinking in this guide include Brainstorming and Nominal Group Technique.

## Credit

**The way to get things done is not to mind who gets the credit of doing them.**

*Benjamin Jowett.*

Organisations are usually looking for credit, particularly if it leads to publicity to impress their funders and members. This can, of course, cause problems if the key parties in a participation process care more for column inches than achieving some common purpose. As a practitioner managing a process you are most likely to succeed if you:

- Try and find ways for the different interests to achieve something of what they want.
- Offer events and activities which provide benefits to participants they could not get on their own.
- Don’t try and take too much credit yourself

See also *Commitment, Consensus-building, Stakeholder analysis.*

## Criteria

Criteria are the checklist of measurements which help us decide between different courses of action, options or projects. Typical ‘hard’

## Simple Cost/benefit analysis

- 1 Develop a list of options to be compared.
- 2 Look at the ‘minuses’ (costs) and ‘pluses’ (benefits) of each option.
- 3 List anything you don’t know about each option.

+                      -                      Don't Know

Option 1

Option 2

Option 3. etc. etc.,

4 If it proves difficult to decide because there are too many ‘don’t knows’, carry out more research. Find out who does know, where can you find out, who can help find out. Finding out the ‘Don’t knows’ can be part of your action plan.

5 If an option fits in with your statement of purpose, give it a plus. If it does not then why are you considering it?

criteria might be income generation, value for money, jobs created; ‘softer’ criteria might include number of people involved, increase in confidence. Which criteria you use depends on your values. As well as criteria for deciding between options, you will need criteria for success or failure in achieving your mission (purpose or vision). Is it winning, or just playing the game?

See also *Values.*

## Databases

At its simplest a database is the equivalent of a card index system on computer, holding names, address, details of publications or funding sources which can be searched, printed for mailing, and turned into directories. More complex databases may be used to store and analyse survey data. The general rule for databases is to do it on paper before trying to set anything up on computer. Information for Action has designed database software, called Cata-List, which is specifically designed for easy use by community and voluntary organisations.

See also *Information system.*

## Deadlines

**Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion.**

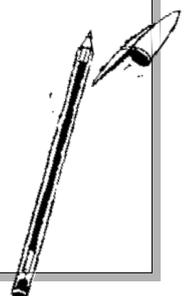
*C. Northcote Parkinson.*

Participation takes time, but it also needs deadlines. Events and print are the most compelling because you have to perform or produce for someone else. As such they are among the most important milestones in a participation process.

See also *Timeline, Workload planning.*

## Deciding together

Deciding together is the level of participation at which different interests develop options and choose from them, but one party carries out the main actions. It is appropriate:



- When it is important that other people 'own' the solution.
  - You need fresh ideas.
  - There is enough time.
- Choose a different level (suggestions in brackets) when:
- You have little room for manoeuvre (consider informing or consulting).
  - You can't implement decisions yourself (consider Acting Together or Supporting community initiatives).

See also *Decision-making* and the section *Where do you stand?*

## Decision-making

'Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?'  
 'That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,' said the cat.  
 'I don't much care where –', said Alice.  
 'Then it doesn't matter which way you go', said the cat.

*Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll.*

Decisions are about what to do next, and in the longer term. They are difficult enough for individuals, more so for groups of people who may not know each other well. Decisions are easiest if you are clear about aims and objectives (no apologies for repeating Lewis Carroll here). However, it is possible to make progress without a clear sense of purpose, if you have options from which to choose, and criteria. You can then develop an action plan.

Difficult decisions are problems. In order to solve problems and make decisions the following steps may be helpful – although life is seldom as logical. The Strategic Choice technique provides a more flexible, if complex, approach. Topics and techniques which may help are shown in brackets.

## Delegation

Delegation is important in groups if they are to survive in the longer term. Although most

groups revolve around the enthusiasm of a few people, unless they share the load they will burn out and/or others will see them as a clique. To encourage delegation:

- Run workshops to share ideas and develop action plans.
- Set up small working groups to tackle specific tasks.
- Carry out a skills audit to see what talent there is in the group.

See also *Leadership*.

## Design game

Community Land and Workspace Services have developed this modelling technique which uses a scale plan of the site, mounted on board. Moveable pieces, drawn to scale, are then used by the group to create their own design. It is best used:

- When the project is definitely going ahead.
- Where the site has definable boundaries, and is not too large.
- Where the participants have an intimate knowledge.

The benefits include:

- A sense of ownership which benefits long term management and maintenance.
- The process helps to form consensus.
- A fairly large number of people can be involved in a complex design process.
- It can help credibility of a management committee by spreading involvement to a wider audience.

### Playing the design game

- 1 Survey the site, perhaps with residents or users, and assess the problems with them.
- 2 Investigate possibilities with the group: site visits, slide shows of examples.
- 3 Brainstorm a shopping list of possible elements, which are then drawn to scale.
- 4 The Main Game: the group moves pieces around on the base board plan to create their own design.
- 5 A Landscape Architect draws up the results for group discussion.
- 6 A detailed scheme developed to be built by a contractor, by the group themselves, or a combination of the two.

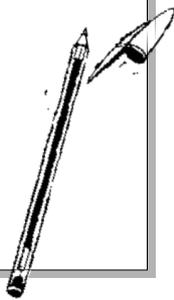
See also *Games and simulations, Planning for Real*.

## Destruction testing

**Look before you leap.**

*Anon*

Once a group has arrived at what seems to be a solution, use the *Looking first* checklist on the next page before acting.



### Decision-making checklist

- 1 Know who must be involved (Stakeholder analysis).
  - 2 Define the problem (Problem clarification).
  - 3 Decide the information you need, and find it (Research).
  - 4 Make sure everyone understands the information (Communication).
  - 5 Think of options (Brainstorming, Nominal group technique).
  - 6 Choose between them (Cost/benefit analysis, Kolb's four minute evaluation cycle, For and Against, Yes or No).
  - 7 If necessary gather more information and repeat 3-6.
  - 8 Make a decision about what to do (Force Field Analysis, Solutions, Voting).
  - 9 Act.
  - 10 Assess whether the problem has been solved (Plan, Act, Review).
- Adapted from *Getting Organised and How to Solve Your Problems*.

## Looking first

1 Ask 'Who or what could prevent this from succeeding?' 'What would be likely to make that happen?'

2 Don't forget that the group itself could prevent the solution from working. So also ask 'If we wanted to make sure our solution fails, what would we do?'

3 Now list what the group should do to make sure that these possible causes for failure don't happen.

From Getting Organised.

## Development trusts

Development Trusts have been defined as 'independent, not-for-profit organisations which take action to renew an area physically, socially and in spirit. They bring together the public, private and voluntary sectors, and obtain financial and other resources from a wide range of organisations and individuals. They encourage substantial involvement by local people and aim to sustain their operations at least in part by generating revenue.' (Creating Development Trusts, HMSO 1988).

Also known as community development trusts, they should not be confused with community trusts, which are fund-raising and grant-making bodies.

Development Trusts operate at the 'acting together' level of participation as partnership organisations, and are usually companies limited by guarantee. The Development Trusts Association will provide more information.

## Development workers

The term is used here for full or part time staff devoted to the development of a project or process, using community development methods.

Benefits of on-the-ground workers can be:

- Reaching people who don't come to meetings.
- A source of advice and support for local individuals and groups.
- Someone with the time to service meetings and follow up action.
- A channel to organisations that may provide resources.

The potential pitfalls are:

- The worker controls the agenda of meetings and events.
- People who might become involved are put off because they don't believe they can so well as a paid worker.
- People do not develop new skills and become dependent on the worker, who may leave or change.

## Guidelines for empowerment

If you aim to empower those involved in a participation process:

- Be explicit about what you are trying to do, and your role.
- Start where people are at – relate your proposals to their concerns.
- Use language and ideas everyone can relate to.
- Help clarify what the various interests are trying to achieve, individually and collectively.

● Look for agreement on the outcomes people want. If that is not possible, be clear who your actions will help.

● Build on people's skills and experience, rather than always expect them to step beyond them.

● Be realistic about what can be achieved.

See also *Community development and Community development methods*.

## Empowerment

Empowerment is a working style which aims to help people achieve their own purpose by increasing their confidence and capacity.

See also *Communication, Confidence, Limits, Outcomes, Role of the practitioner and the section on Power*.

## Enabling

Enabling is participation as if the participants mattered: helping people achieve their purpose at an agreed level of participation. It involves helping people understand, join in decision making, or participate actively in some initiative.

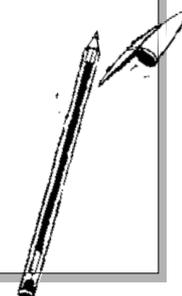
## Equal opportunities

Considering equal opportunities means thinking about and challenging situations in which people may not participate fully because of, for example, their disabilities, culture, gender, ethnicity, learning difficulties. Equal opportunities mean taking participation seriously. The checklist below raises some of the issues to be considered.

### Checklist

Consider:

- Do examples you use reflect only 'white' culture?
- Do you refer to temples, mosques, synagogues as well as churches?
- Does your language suggest norms which may not be shared by all – for example, wife and husband rather than partner?
- Do you use large enough type faces for people with visual disabilities?
- Is material produced in languages which reflect the cultural mix of the community?
- Do you provide a signer at public meetings?



## Evaluation

Evaluation is checking whether you have succeeded, monitoring is checking how you are doing along the way. Both require criteria.

## Exhibitions

Exhibitions may be used to highlight an issue, report on a survey, or offer people some options. As such they provide information, and allow some consultation. Unless they are part of a more substantial process they will not, in themselves, help people participate actively in making decisions. *Creating Involvement* provides guidelines for publicity and exhibitions.

### Exhibition guidelines

- Involve the community you are addressing in preparing material.
- Avoid jargon – use familiar terms.
- Use memorable phrases or facts.
- Be imaginative in using illustrations, video and drama.
- Make sure you are relevant and timely – give people enough time to respond.
- Take the exhibition to people, perhaps using mobile displays.
- Provide back up information.

## Exit

There are few things more demoralising for all concerned than to have the key person pull out part way through a complex participation process. Almost as bad is for someone who presented themselves as facilitator or enabler to hang in long after key issues have been resolved, or a group developed its own momentum and confidence. For that reason it is important, if you are managing a participation process, to consider how and when to leave as well as how to start.

## Experts

**Everyone is ignorant, only on different subjects.**

*Will Rogers.*

It may be necessary to seek professional advice on several fronts: for example, it is important to consult a solicitor when setting up a charitable company if you are to avoid problems and delays.

The local Citizens Advice Bureau, and Council for Voluntary Service provide signposting to advisers. However, empowering participation processes are about finding out how to do things for yourself, and a good place to start is with the group you are working with.

*See also Skills Audit.*

## Facilitation

Much of this guide is about facilitation – helping others think through what they want and organise themselves to achieve it. The role of the practitioner – as someone managing a participation process – is frequently that of facilitator.

Two books, listed in *Useful Publications*, provide detailed guidance on facilitating groups:

*Change and how to make it happen* covers preparation, team building, equal opportunities, problem solving, and planning. *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* includes a section on facilitation, problems that commonly arise, and tools frequently used at meetings.

## Five Ws plus H

**The simplest questions are the hardest to answer.**

*Northrop Frye*

Whatever you are planning to do five Ws provide a simple checklist to help you think of the issues:

**What** are you trying to do, decide, explain?

**When** must you start and finish?

**Why** is it necessary?

**Who** needs to be consulted, involved?

**Where** is it happening?

H stands for **How**, which you need to consider after running through the Ws.

*See also Action plans.*

## Focus Groups

Focus groups are small groups of people who work through an issue in workshop sessions.

## For and Against

**Decide: to succumb to the preponderance of one set of influences over another set.**

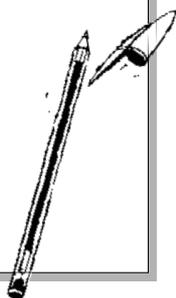
*Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary.*

An even simpler version of Cost/benefit analysis, also known as pros and cons.

### Pros and cons

When, in decision making, you have more than one possible option which could provide a solution:

- Make two columns on a sheet of paper, one headed For and one Against.
- List all the points in favour and against, for each solution.
- Add at the bottom of each list any other factors which might influence you.
- Weigh the fors and againsts in making a decision.



## Force Field Analysis

This is a technique for working out the forces driving towards a solution you want, and those against.

### Force field analysis

1 Describe the problem as:

- The present situation.
- The situation as you would like it to be.

2 List the forces for, and those against. Underline those most important, and identify those you can influence.

3 Brainstorm how you can increase the forces for, and reduce those against.

The idea behind force field analysis is that you can achieve more by reducing the forces against than simply pressing harder – which may simply increase the resistance. Adapted from *Getting Organised*.

## Framework for participation

This guide suggests thinking about three dimensions of participation:

- The level of participation which is appropriate, from simply providing information to offering support for independent community initiatives
- The phase of the activity, from Initiation to Continuation.
- The key interests, or stakeholders involved.

See the *Framework* section.

## Fundraising

If the participation process is more than simple information-giving or consultation, there may well come a time when outside resources will be needed. In planning any fundraising consider:

- What do you need the money for, and how much? Do a Budget.
- When will you need it? Produce a Timeline.
- What will you do if you can't raise the total you need?
- Who is likely to give you the money?
- Why should they want to support you?
- Will you need more money later when initial funds are used up?

## Games and simulations

Games and simulations offer some of the most effective techniques for helping people to 'play through' the issues and understand the interests of the different stakeholders. Designing simulations obliges you to think through who the different interests are, the

problems they may face, the rules by which they may operate and so on.

At their simplest simulations may involve taking a particular issue and getting people to adopt different roles and negotiate with each other. More complex simulations can run over several days.

I have listed two books in *Useful Publications*, one educational, and one about management games, but haven't found any references which are particularly relevant to participation process. The technique *Planning for Real* has achieved popularity not least, I suspect, because it is one of the few packages available. I have developed a 'Business Planning for Real' simulation in which a steering group or Board plays through different project, staffing and funding options aided by a computer running a spreadsheet and found that highly effective.

See also *Community planning weekends*.

## Getting things done

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**It is easier to seek forgiveness than to ask permission.**

*Paddy Docherty.*

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How you make things happen within a participation process depends on the style you adopt, the role you play, and what you are trying to achieve. The style needed to run a project or organisation may not be appropriate for someone seeking to help others to understand problems and make decisions.

See also *Approach, Enabling, Facilitation, Leadership, Role of the practitioner.*

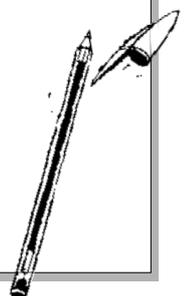
## Groups

Understanding groups is important in participation processes because:

- Many of the participants – stakeholders – will be members of formal or informal groups.
- Working in groups – that is, holding workshops – is one of the most effective participation methods.
- Groups are generally necessary to plan and take forward projects.
- Well-tryed methods of developing and running groups can be more widely useful in participation processes

The most effective longer-term groups are those where people share a common purpose and can provide support for each other, recognising that each person brings different skills, ideas and attitudes. See two of the books in the *Useful publications* section:

*Planning Together* offers a detailed set of exercises particularly suitable for groups and groups within an organisation. These range



## Agreeing your image

To develop agreement within a group about the way you wish to present yourself:

- 1 Write on a chart 'What image do we need if we are to meet our objectives?' Everyone writes down three words characterising the organisation.
- 2 People pair up and explain their choices.
- 3 Each pair in turn announces and explains their words. Write the words up on a chart. You could use Post-it notes and cluster similar terms.

4 Ask 'Who is the image for?' and discuss if the same image works for all. If not, make new sheets for each audience.

5 List ways the organisation relates to outsiders – e.g. telephone contacts, letter-writing. Small groups develop ideas on how to live up to the image.

6 Produce summary charts from 3, 4 and 5. Develop an action plan.

Summarised from *Organising in voluntary and community groups resource pack*. Resource 32.

from taking stock, developing and sharing a vision, to getting organised and evaluating progress.

*Training and How to Enjoy It* is a collection of training exercises covering groups and meetings; publicity and campaigning; equal opportunities; finance and funding; planning and problem solving.

See also *Team building*.

## Icebreakers

Icebreakers are techniques to help a group of people get to know each other. At its simplest, just ask people to turn to their neighbour and come up with a few questions or ideas around a point you have raised. People usually start by explaining who they are, why they are there before getting around to what you asked – which is the purpose of the exercise.

## Ideas

**An idea is a feat of association, and the height of it is a good metaphor.**

*Robert Frost.*

The book *101 Ways to Generate Great Ideas* provides sections on generating ideas yourself, and in groups. These include:

- Carry a pocket dictating machine.
- Close your eyes and let your mind wander.
- Don't say 'But, say 'And'.
- Have a brainstorming session.
- Use a facilitator.
- Make a clay model of the problem.

Or take Robert Frost's suggestion and think of an analogy – see that item. Ideas can be refined to become the options you need in order to make decisions.

See also *Options*.

## Identity and image

We judge information by style as well as content – just as we form judgements about people by the clothes they wear. Corporate

identity is the designer's term for the way everything about an organisation looks and sounds, from the typeface of the letterhead to the way staff answer the telephone. This is important in participation processes because:

■ People are sophisticated in their judgements of identity. They will subconsciously check whether for example, your open, friendly, personal style fits with the aggressive, inflexible promotional material of your organisation. If not, they won't trust your ability to deliver what you say if that involves others in your organisation.

■ Working with a designer and writer to develop identity on a large project is an excellent way of clarifying what you are trying to say and to whom.

■ Once you have developed a strong sense of identity you have to live up to it. If presentation starts to outweigh performance, people will spot it rapidly. The resulting feeling of discomfort is a useful form of monitoring – either you deceived yourself at the outset or you are off course.

See also *Communication*.

## Information

**Knowledge is power.**

*Francis Bacon*

Information is the level of participation which offers least involvement – it is more an essential basis for real participation at 'higher' levels than participatory in itself. It is appropriate where, for example:

- There really is no room for manoeuvre.
- The course of action doesn't affect others.
- At the start of a consultation or other process.

Choose a different level if:

- You are seeking to empower community interests. Information is necessary for empowerment, but seldom enough on its own.
- There are alternatives and others have a legitimate interest in developing them.

See the section on information in *Where do you stand?*

## Information systems

Information systems are the means by which you organise the collection, storage and dissemination of information. These may include your internal administrative systems, the letters you write, print you produce, meetings you hold. The methods may include the use of information technology. A participation process requires an information system which can deal with:

■ The lack of a common language – jargon often gets in the way.

■ The lack of common ways of communicating – people don't all work in the same organisation, read the same papers, go to the same meetings. Information systems are particularly important if the organisational structure you are moving towards is a network. Information is the glue which hold networks together that may lack a formal constitution.

### **A basic system**

A basic information system for participation might include:

- A card index or database of contacts.
- A range of ways of providing information – face to face networking as well as leaflets, meetings etc.
- A system for recording and reporting back what has occurred. This might be a bulletin, or follow up meeting for example.
- Appropriate elements of an administrative system.

See *Administrative system*.

## **Information Technology**

**To err is human but to really foul things up requires a computer.**

*Farmers Almanac for 1978.*

Information technology is the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of information using computers and telecommunications.

Like all communication methods IT can work for or against the involvement and empowerment of different groups. As the cost of computing falls, small groups can manage their mailing lists, produce newsletters and even manage their accounts using computers. They can also waste a lot of time and effort. Before using computers:

- Clarify the aims and objectives of a project of organisation. If these aren't clear IT may just add to the confusion.
- Work out the type of information you are handling and the channels it must flow through (letters, mailing lists, newsletters, project records). This will define the software you use – word processing, database etc.
- Define who is responsible for managing the information flows.

In buying computers expect to spend as much on software and training as you do on the hardware – the computers, printer and other equipment. Expect to take some time to get a system up and running.

*Some participation techniques use computers. See Priority Search, Village Appraisals.*

## **Initiation**

The first of four stages of the participation process described in the section *It takes time*. In this phase some event – a campaign, plans for a project, an offer of funding – triggers the need to involve different interests. The key issues are then who should be involved, and at what level.

See also *Stakeholders, Level of participation*.

## **Insurance**

Groups undertaking any significant activities should check their requirements for insurance. For example:

- Public liability insurance to cover members of the group and public for personal injury or damage to property.
- Premises and contents.
- Employers' liability.
- Handling money.
- Use of vehicles.
- Professional advice indemnity.
- Trustees liability.

Consult another voluntary organisation or an insurance broker, and assign responsibility for maintaining insurance cover.

See the book *Voluntary but not Amateur*.

## **Kolb's cycle**

Brenda Rogers offers this four minute method of making decisions in *How to solve your problems*.

### **Quick decisions**

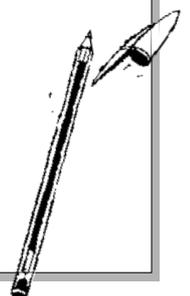
With a clock, first get clear what event or problem you are considering, then:

- 1** Spend one minute considering how you feel – emotions, not profound ideas.
- 2** Spend another minute reflecting on these feelings.
- 3** During the third minute ask yourself about your theories on **1** and **2** – why you feel that, what you expect to happen.
- 4** Take half a minute to reach a decision.
- 5** In the final half minute consider actions.

See also *Decision making, Plan, Act, Review, Yes or No*

## **Launch**

A launch is the point at which you formally announce or celebrate a process or project. As such, a launch event can come at the beginning of a process – during the Preparation or Participation phase – or later during Continuation. The launch can be useful both



externally and also within an organisation:

- It provides a formal start line if used at the beginning, when you can outline the overall process and your stance.
- It is a good time to attract media coverage.
- It is an opportunity for social contacts.
- It is a deadline for making decisions and preparing materials.

See also *Communication, Identity and Image, Time Line.*

## Leadership

**To lead the people, walk behind them.**

*Lao-Tzu.*

As a reaction against the stereotype of the autocratic leader, it is fashionable in some management development circles to suggest that everyone can be a leader – that is, everyone can try and fulfil their purpose in life, and help others do the same. That may not be how most people see the issue of leadership, but it can be another helpful way of looking at issues of confidence, capacity, empowerment and enabling.

Sandy Adirondack, in *Just about managing?* suggests it is helpful to think about the different management strengths needed within a group or organisation: the equivalent, perhaps, of leadership styles. She identifies: co-ordinator, shaper, innovator, evaluator, liaison, organiser, team builder, finisher, specialist.

## Leaflets and newsletters

Some simple form of printed material will almost certainly be necessary in a participation process – but will not be enough alone to gain people's involvement. There is no substitute for knocking on doors or networking. If the participation process is lengthy, it may be worth considering a regular newsletter or bulletin to report back on surveys, meetings and other activities.

See also *Communication, Print.*

### Leadership audit

Middlesbrough Borough Council uses a 'leadership audit' in community development work with 100 questions for members of groups or organisations. Participants choose statements which they feel are broadly true from a list which includes, for example:

- Everyone is usually involved in decisions affecting them.
- Morale is high.
- New ideas and suggestions are welcomed.
- We feel we can have influence on decisions.

The scores are analysed against the following attributes: vision, prioritising, motivation, interpersonal skills, political sensitivity, resilience, charisma, risk taking, flexibility, decisiveness.

The audit pack then suggests ways of correcting weaknesses.

## Levels of participation

Levels of participation are the different degrees of involvement offered to others by whoever is starting or managing a participation process.

The levels used in this guide are Information, Consultation, Deciding Together, Acting Together, and Supporting Independent Community Initiatives. Methods for tackling problems and making progress are listed under each one.

No one level is necessarily better than another – each may be appropriate in different circumstances. However they do represent different balances of control between the different interests. Empowerment may be seen as helping people reach the higher levels – provided that is what they want to do.

See also items on each level, and the section *Where do you stand?*

## Limits

**Sometimes it is more important to discover what one cannot do, than what one can do.**

*Lin Yutang.*

There's only so much any participation or capacity-building process can achieve, and it is important to agree what is realistic early in the process. People are more likely to accept limitations, if they are put openly and honestly, than disappointments later. That approach offers the different interests an opportunity to decide whether to get involved, or take some other action.

## Listening

**One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears.**

*Dean Rusk.*

Listening is important at all stages of the participation process:

- To find out what people's interests are.
- To learn the language they use.
- To understand what role you can most usefully play.
- To find what people think of what is happening.

See also *Communication.*

## Management committee

The governing body for a project or organisation, to which staff are accountable. In a company the management committee is the Board of directors. If the organisation is a charity the members of the management committee will be trustees. In appointing management committees it is important to

strike a balance between representation and competence. Little will be achieved if everyone on the committee has to learn how to manage an organisation. At the same time, a committee which has no representation of key interests may well find itself in difficulty.

See also *Committees and the book Just about managing? for detailed advice on management committees.*

## Media

**News is what somebody somewhere wants to suppress; all the rest is advertising.**

*Lord Northcliffe.*

The media is mainly in the business of interesting and entertaining its users, and of selling itself or advertising. It is not there as a public service to promote your ideas or project. There are, of course, exceptions: public service announcements, community programmes, specialist publications, and the newsletters of local organisations. Parish magazines and what's on guides can be useful.

However, if you are seeking space in newspapers, on local radio or television, you will generally have to think news or features. Journalists judge what is news against 'news values' which vary between papers and stations, but generally include:

- Conflict (where's the row).
- Hardship (how many hurt, who is in danger).
- Oddity (that's unusual).
- Scandal (sex, corruption).
- Individuality (what an interesting person).
- Disclosure (we can reveal).

Local journalists have a more relaxed view than Lord Northcliffe, but you do need to consider what's in the story for them (and the editorial executive who will decide whether it goes in the paper).

Features writers may be less concerned with disclosure or scandal, but still need an interesting story to tell. Would your story be worth telling to a friend outside the project? If not, why should readers or viewers be interested?

See also *Press releases.*

## Meetings

Meetings are at the heart of participation processes, whether social get-togethers, committees, workshops, or public meetings. See the checklist about meetings opposite.

See the publication *How to Make Meetings Work*, and also *Access, Committees, Public meetings, Workshops.*

## Media checklist

- Consider why you want coverage – for example, to publicise an event, get enquiries, show supporters or funders what you are achieving.
- If possible identify a reporter covering your field, or link your story to other current events.
- Try and turn your story into an opportunity for pictures: essential for television, likely to get you more space in newspapers.
- Prepare a press release and expect to deal with newspaper reporters on the telephone. However, stay in touch with anyone you deal with and try to meet at some stage. Personal contacts generally produce more sympathetic stories, and are invaluable if you later face a difficult situation which could lead to adverse coverage.

## Methods for participation

The methods for participation featured in this guide fall under three main heads

**Techniques.** Frequently used short-term interventions employed by consultants and trainers. They range from communication materials and simple workshop sessions through to more complex methods of decision-making like Strategic Choice.

**Structures.** Interim and longer-term organisational structures used in participation processes. They range from working parties and advisory committees to partnership organisations like development trusts, and community-based coops.

**Longer-term programmes** which may involve staff devoted partly or wholly to the programme as well as the use of techniques and structures.

See also the *Signposts* section

## Meetings checklist

For effective meetings, consider:

- The style of the meeting. If it is to be a creative workshop rather than a committee, make sure people know that in advance.
- An accessible venue (public transport, disabled access).
- Child care (crèche, financial assistance).
- What information and notice is appropriate beforehand. In general, provide papers with options for formal meetings, but only an outline of the aims for a workshop so that people are spontaneous.
- Any aids you will need: charts, projectors etc.
- The layout of the room, and scope for breaking into small groups. Avoid a platform and lecture-style seating if possible.
- Good management of the meeting itself: see committees, public meetings, workshops.

Follow up to make sure that action has been taken and to inform people of the outcome.



## Mind Maps

Mind maps or spidergrams are a graphical technique for exploring solutions to problems.

### Drawing mind maps

- 1 Take a large sheet of paper, write your problem in the middle, and draw a line around it.
- 2 List all the reasons for the problem in a circle around the centre, each in a bubble.
- 3 Add in the solutions you can think of and connect these to any of the causes or people involved or situations connected with it.

Summarised from *How to Solve Your Problems*.

## Minutes

Minutes are the formal record of meetings. As such they are an important reference point for any discussions or arguments about what was decided. They can be a spur to action as well. See the box below on how to develop action minutes.

## Mission

Mission is what you wish to achieve. The term is much favoured in business management, but can confuse people with its military or evangelical overtones. 'Purpose' is an alternative, although it has a slightly different sense – I think mission has a stronger emphasis on end result.

See also *Aims and objectives, Outcomes, Purpose*.

## Mistakes

**There is nothing wrong with making mistakes. Just don't respond with encores.**

*Anon*

You will certainly make them – at least in the eyes of some of those involved. Try and be



## Action minutes

Turn minutes of meetings into action plans by:

- 1 Creating a standard form with these headings.

Meeting	Date		
Attended by	Apologies		
Agenda item	Action	By whom	Deadline
Item 1	To do	Who	By when
Item 2	To do	Who	By when

- 2 During the meeting one member records the items and action to be taken. The chair or facilitator helps by making sure clear decisions are taken

- 3 Photocopy the forms and circulate at the end of the meeting.

Summarised from *Planning Together*.

honest about what happened, and use the results to reshape the process.

See *Plan, Act, Review*.

## Monitoring and evaluation

At the end of any piece of action you need to know two things that will aid future planning:

- How do we know we have been successful?
- What can we learn so that we can do it better, or what is the next step?

In order to do this you ideally need to be clear about aims and objectives or purpose, and criteria for judging success. Setting yourself the task of creating a system for monitoring and evaluation may help clarify the purpose and criteria.

### Checklist

In planning monitoring and evaluation, consider:

- What are we trying to do?
- How will we know we have done it?
- What information do we need to collect and how do we collect it?
- When is the best time to evaluate how successful it has been?
- What can we count to use in monitoring and evaluation?
- Who externally will judge – and on what terms?
- What satisfaction are we looking for?

See also *Criteria, Outcomes*.

## Muddle

If you find you aren't sure what to do next, or just seem to go around in circles, try one or more of these techniques:

- Check that you agree on your aims and objectives.
- Do a SWOT analysis.
- Brainstorm some new ideas.
- Develop priorities by drawing up a Time Line.
- Follow the Plan, Act, Review cycle.

See also *Problem clarification*.

## Negotiation

Negotiation is 'a back-and-forth communication designed to reach an agreement when you and the other side have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed.' (*Getting to Yes*).

Practitioners in participation processes are bound to get involved in negotiation as

different interests try and work out what they want from any situation, and have degrees of control over the results. You can end up trying to mediate between different factions, facilitating groups discussions, or negotiating between community interests and their own organisation. *Getting to Yes* advocates:

- 1 Separating the people from the problem. Put yourself in other people's shoes to see the problem from their point of view; don't attack the people, address the problem.
- 2 Focus on interests, not positions. Try and find areas where the outcomes you are seeking will overlap.
- 3 Invent options for mutual gain. Be creative in developing ideas which could serve to achieve the overlapping interests.
- 4 Insist on objective criteria. Agree ways of judging and reaching solutions which are agreed to be fair.

## Networking

Networking is the business of making informal contacts, chatting, and picking up further contacts. It is the way to learn:

- What people are interested in – the issues they consider important.
- The sort of ideas and language they find familiar.
- Who are the key people and organisations – the stakeholders.

Some networking is essential before other more formal information-giving like producing leaflets, staging exhibitions and holding meetings. Two specific techniques are suggested in the book *Creating Involvement*:

- 1 Telephone trees. A group of people takes responsibility for ringing several others, who in turn ring a further round of contacts.
- 2 Co-ordinators take responsibility for keeping people in their street or block informed.

## Nominal Group Technique

This technique – sometimes called Snowball – can be used with fairly large groups and is often more successful than Brainstorming with small groups.

See also *Action plans, Brainstorming*.

## Options

**As I learnt very early in my life in Whitehall, the acid test of any political question is: What is the alternative?**

*Lord Trent.*

'There is no alternative' is seldom true. Options are the different ways in which you might

achieve what you want, or just take the next step. They are ideas on how to tackle problems and reach solutions.

In order to generate options use Brainstorming or Nominal Group Technique.

See also *Creative thinking, Ideas*.

## Outcomes

The term 'outcomes' is used in this guide to describe those results of plans and actions which you are seeking to achieve.

Thinking in terms of outcomes which you may see, hear, feel as well as the more abstract aims and objectives should help clarify what to do to achieve what you want. One of the most important questions in any participation process is What outcome do you want?

See also *Aims and objectives, Plan, Act Review, Purpose*.

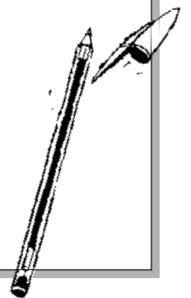
## Ownership

The stake that people have in an idea, a project or an organisation is fundamental to their commitment. 'Not invented here' is a powerful block to gaining people's involvement – whether they are councillors, officers, professionals, business people or residents. For that reason early brainstorming workshops, where everyone has a chance to contribute ideas, are important.

See also *Control*.

## Parish maps

A technique in which features of human and natural interest which local people value are shown on a map of the locality and publicly displayed. The maps can be any size, shape, scale or material – such as paint, ceramic,



## Nominal Group Technique

- 1 Before the meeting clarify what information it is hoped to gather, then develop two specific questions.
- 2 At the meeting, explain the procedure and split into small groups of 6-8, each with a leader. Display the questions.
- 3 People work on their own (or in pairs) quietly for 10-15 minutes answering the questions.
- 4 Group members read out – and the leader lists – the results. Items are clarified or challenged if necessary.
- 5 Group members vote for their top 5 answers to each question.
- 6 In plenary session the group leaders display and explain summary charts, and an overall summary is made if possible.
- 7 The next stage depends on the content of the meeting, and where it is in an overall process. People can be asked to move back into small groups to take forward particular ideas. Alternatively, people may be given 5 stickers each and asked to vote for their priorities.
- 8 The meeting should close with a summary of what has happened and what the next stages are likely to be.

textiles or photography. Advice and information is available from the Parish Maps Project at Common Ground, who publish two useful booklets *Parish Maps* and *The Parish Boundary*. Rural Community Councils have helped with parish maps by providing information and support (contact ACRE for local addresses).

## Participation

**1** A process during which individuals, groups and organisations are consulted about or have the opportunity to become actively involved in a project or programme of activity.

**2** The third phase of the participation process described in the section *It takes time*. In this phase whoever is promoting and managing participation engages with the range of interests in the community, using methods described in this guide.

See also *Easy answers and Guidelines on how to...*

## Partnership

Partnerships are formal or informal arrangements to work together to some joint purpose. In my view:

■ Informal partnerships work best when the project is specific and can be achieved relatively quickly: the purpose is clear, and outcomes achievable.

■ Where the task is complex and long term it may be necessary to formalise the partnership through some constitution or contractual arrangement. This provides a structure for decision-making and agreeing ways of working.

■ What doesn't work is to try and tackle a wide range of issues through an informal partnership, particularly if the parties do not know each other well.

■ On the other hand, simply setting up a partnership structure doesn't solve the problems. You still need to work through clarifying joint purpose, values etc.

See also *Acting together*.

## Past and Future

This is a simple technique in which a group uses past shared experiences to think about the future. See the box above.

## Phases of participation

Participation is not achieved in one survey, leaflet or meeting – it is a process. People and groups need time to understand what is proposed, develop trust and work out what to do. This guide identifies four main phases in a

## Past and future

**1** Split into groups of 3 or 4

**2** Provide each group with a large piece of paper label PAST at the top, and FUTURE at the bottom, and about 20 Post-it notes.

**3** Each group member writes what they thought most worthwhile or successful in the past, and what they should be tackling in future. One point to a note.

**4** People stick notes on the appropriate part of the paper, and cluster them when they are similar.

**5** Small groups report back to the larger group.

Adapted from *Training and How to Enjoy It*, John Grayson.

participation process, and takes them as one of the main dimensions of the framework of participation. The phases are:

**Initiation:** something triggers the idea of participation, and a champion emerges for the process.

**Preparation:** the practitioner who will manage the process plans it with the promoter/champion, makes informal contacts and agrees a strategy.

**Participation:** materials are produced, events held, and other participation methods used to involve a range of interests.

**Continuation:** the proposals, projects or programmes agreed in the previous phase are taken forward

The section *It takes time* describes the phases in more detail.

## Plan, act, review

**Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.**

*Theodore Roosevelt.*

In order to make regular checks on progress and keep your plans under review, see development of your participation process as a cycle:

■ Plan how you will achieve your aims.

■ Take action on the basis of these plans.

■ Review progress regularly.

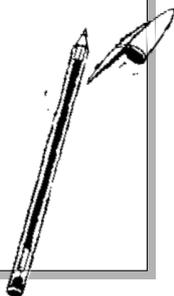
■ If necessary, modify your plans.

■ Put the new plans into action....and so on

## Planning for Real

Planning for Real is a powerful technique for involving individuals and groups in decisions about their neighbourhood, a site or building by producing a three-dimensional model. The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation has produced a pack for the three-stage process:

**1** Everyone from school children to residents and local workers are encouraged to be



involved in the process of preparing the model. A local skills survey may also be carried out.

**2** The model is exhibited at different places around the locality – cafes, libraries, shops and pubs – with extensive publicity.

**3** Workshops are held at which everyone is encouraged to place cut-out cards representing uses, problems or other issues on the model. Small groups concerned with specific issues rearrange suggestions and negotiate with other groups. An action plan is produced.

The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation produces a range of packs to facilitate the process. Planning for Real and similar model-based techniques can be very effective in involving people because they allow ‘hands on’ responses, do not rely on written material, and give everyone a say. If the technique is to be used honestly – rather than to create false expectations – it is important that:

- People are aware of the ‘real world’ constraints on making physical and other changes.
- It is clear where responsibility for decisions lies, and how far the ideas developed will be taken on by, say, professional designers who may be involved in the process.
- If there is to be some degree of community involvement in implementation, some organisational development takes place.

See also *Design Game, Structures and the book Creating Involvement for a longer discussion.*

## Politicians

**I have never regarded politics as the arena of morals. It is the arena of interests.**

*Aneurin Bevan.*

Politicians—councillors, MPs—will be important stakeholders in any participation process. They are in the business of identifying different interest groups, and balancing priorities. On the one hand they may be a stumbling block, concerned about challenges to their power and status.

On the other hand they can be an invaluable source of contacts and influence. Like any other stakeholder it is important to see things from their point of view – to find what they are interested in, what they are seeking to achieve – and to get to know them informally. Try and judge their leadership style, and work with them accordingly. You may get more done if you let them take some credit.

See also *Leadership, Stakeholders.*

## Post-it notes

A great technical aid to collective decision-making, and an improvement on basic Brainstorming. When running workshops give people pads of Post-its to write their ideas on, then stick them on a chart and move them around into groups.

## Power

Behind participation processes lie issues of power and control. For example:

- Do all key interests have an equal ability or opportunity to participate if they wish?
- Who designs the process, and to whom are they accountable?
- Who sets the timetable and controls the funds?
- Who makes the final decisions?

Participation techniques can disempower people if they are used – consciously or unconsciously – to mask these fundamental questions.

See the longer section on *Power and also Access, Control, Empowerment, Ownership.*

## Practitioner

The term used in this guide to signify the person most concerned with how a participation process is moved forward.

See also *Role of the practitioner.*

## Preparation

The second phase in the process of participation described in the section *It takes time*. In this phase the practitioner managing the process should clarify key issues with whoever is promoting the process, make informal contact with interests in the community, and develop a strategy.

See also *Guidelines on how to...*

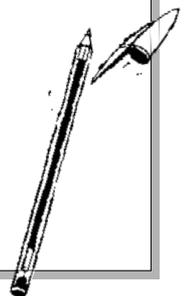
## Presentations

**Speaking without thinking is like shooting without taking aim.**

*Spanish proverb.*

Presentations are speeches with props. These may range from a simple flip chart to slides and videos. However, the effectiveness of your presentation will depend more on careful planning than technology. See the checklist on the next page for some of the issues to consider.

See also *Communication, Information, Press releases.*



## Presentation checklist

- Define your objective. For example: to inform the audience of our new project and explain how they can be involved.
- Brainstorm your main ideas using index cards or, if you have one, an outliner on a computer. (This is like a word processor with automatic sub-heading and sub-sub-headings).
- Keep the main ideas to not more than five if possible. Organise others as sub-points
- Put yourself in the place of the audience and think what impression they will get and questions they will ask.
- If necessary revise your presentation

with as much emphasis as possible on benefits for the audience.

- Prepare your visual aids – flip chart, slides – and a handout.
- Remember KISS – keep it short, and simple: one main ideas per sheet or slide. Use short phrases only as prompts to your presentation.

Presentations are most appropriate for informing and consulting rather than deciding together. However they are an excellent way of clarifying what you are trying to say – and getting feedback – at the start of any participation process.

## Press Releases

Journalists are bombarded with press releases and bin most of them. Generally personal contact produces more result on important issues. However, you may well need to produce press releases to announce events, provide background, summarise reports or circulate speeches in advance.

See also *Communication, Five Ws plus H, Media.*

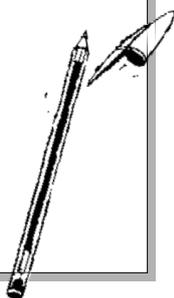
### Checklist

- Write the release as a news story covering who, why, what, where, when, how.
- Use a short headline and an interesting first paragraph.
- Avoid jargon.
- Keep it short.
- Include lively quotes if possible.
- Use one side of the paper only, wide margins and double spacing.
- Date the release, and indicate if there is a time embargo on use.
- Provide a contact number for further enquiries.

## Principles of participation

The advice in this guide is based on the following principles:

- Effective participation requires a planned process in which the key interests agree on the level of participation which is appropriate.
- Participation involves developing agreement on both what is to be achieved – the outcomes – and how it is to be done – the methods.
- Participation is a process of learning and development for all concerned. It takes time.
- People will only be involved if they understand each other, have the confidence to participate, and can see some point to it.
- The use of short-term methods and



techniques for participation requires understanding of the overall process, and skilled application. There are no quick fixes.

## Print

Print is not always the most effective means of communication, but it is important everything of importance is written down and appropriate material is freely available. Among the print methods you may use are:

■ Committee reports and other formal papers. Are they freely available – and if not, why not? Few people may be interested, but making them available combats rumours and dispels mistrust.

■ Letterheads for a project or new organisation. These may seem simple, but raise important questions of what you are called, where you are based, and the way you present yourself.

■ Leaflets and posters. Useful in two ways. First externally – to promote meetings or give a simple explanation of your project. Second internally – challenging you to agree on what you are trying to say, to whom, and what response you want.

■ Newsletters. Worth doing if you have regular new information, or production is a good way of involving people. Bulletins linked to events can be effective. Drop newsletters if they become a chore or the self-congratulatory.

■ Folders. Instead of, say, a substantial brochure, consider a card folder containing a newsletter, leaflet, and inserts on letterheads. It is much easier to update.

■ Reports. Putting the results of a project between covers builds credibility. Considering the report during a project, not just at the end, may help you clarify what you are trying to achieve. If you are running an organisation, take trouble over your annual report for the same reasons.

See also *Identity, Information.*

### Print checklist

In preparing print consider:

- Who your audience are.
- What response you want from them: are you informing, consulting, etc?
- The tone of your message – are you promoting yourself, or offering help?
- The use of illustration: pictures are worth quite a few words.
- Style and identity. A clear message and effective design carries more weight than lengthy waffle. Working with a designer will give you a fresh perspective on what you are trying to say.

## Priority Search

Priority Search is a unique survey technique used by the Priority Focus Team, set up by Sheffield City Council, to conduct consultation exercises. The five stages are:

- 1** The key issue or problem is identified with the client, and a survey plan developed.
- 2** Focus groups, each of about 20 people, representative of those to be surveyed develop ideas for solutions around the key issue.
- 3** The solutions form the basis for questionnaire design.
- 4** The questionnaires are completed by the wider population.
- 5** The team analyses the survey results and produces a report for the client showing the consensus order of priority for all those surveyed, and the differences, common themes and trends among different groups in the community.

See *Creating Involvement*. for a fuller description.

## Problem clarification

You can't find an appropriate solution unless you are sure that you are tackling the right problem. A lot of ideas, discussion, and decision-making suffer from a failure to keep asking: 'Is this really the problem?'

### Clarifying problems

Here's a few ideas on how to make sure you are clear:

- 1** Explain the problem to someone else, simply. Listen to what they say.
- 2** Consider what would be a solution – what outcome you are seeking. Where are you now? What are the obstacles in getting from here to there?
- 3** Split what you may want from what you really need – and concentrate on the needs.
- 4** Do a SWOT analysis.

## Problems

Problems are what make us think. In participation processes they are the barriers to progress, conflicts, uncertainties which make it difficult to know what to do.

See also *Barriers to participation*, *Decision making*, *Problem Clarification*

## Process as a journey

Planning and carrying out a project or participation process can be seen as a journey. The key questions, and topics and techniques which may help answer them are:

- 1** Where are you now? (Assessment, Stakeholder analysis, SWOT).
- 2** Where do you want to be? (Outcomes,

## Public meetings checklist

If you do hold a public meeting:

- Ensure good preparation and publicity.
- Research local concerns and focus on these rather than generalised issues.
- Keep any presentations short with opportunities for audience response.
- Consider running workshop groups with report back, rather than keeping everyone together all the time.
- Choose someone independent and locally respected as chair.
- Ensure the venue is easily accessible.
- Build on the results.

Purpose).

- 3** What is the best way to get there? (Action Planning, Decision Making, Options).
- 4** What barriers may you face? (Barriers to participation, Problems)
- 5** How you will know how far you have travelled? (Monitoring and Evaluation, Success).

## Public meetings

Although widely used, public meetings are not the most effective method of involving people. While they may be useful for giving information, and gaining support around a clear-cut issue, they are poor vehicles for debate and decision-making. Classic public meetings with a platform party can easily be dominated by a small number of people, and become stage sets for confrontation.

See also *Access*, *Five Ws and H*, *Meetings*, *Presentations*, *Publicity*, *Workshops*. The book *Creating Involvement* provides further guidance on planning and running public meetings.

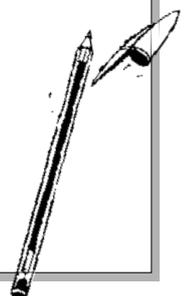
## Publicity

There are three key questions to ask before embarking on any publicity:

- 1** Who are you trying to reach? For example, members of an organisation, the general public, sponsors, media, politicians.
- 2** What result do you want? For example, opinions, volunteers, funding, support.
- 3** How will you respond? For example, personal contact, leaflets, events or in other ways.

The answers to these questions will determine your choice of publicity method – for example, exhibitions, media, events, print or audio-visual.

See also *Communications*, *Identity and Image*, *Five Ws plus H*.



## Purpose

**'If one does not know to which port one is steering, no wind is favourable.'**

*Seneca*

A statement of purpose, or mission statement, is a summary in a sentence or two of your intention – your aims and objectives. It may be the broad statement of the reason for a project or a group's existence. Statements of purpose may start out as broad intentions like 'we aim to create a better place to live and work'. They become meaningful when the aim is followed with statements of how: for example 'by providing advice and support for practical environmental projects'. There may be a number of these 'how to' statements which are objectives. If they are measurable, they become targets. Purpose will be important on two fronts:

- In clarifying why you are carrying out a participation process.
- In reaching a common view among those involved about what result – outcome – they want.

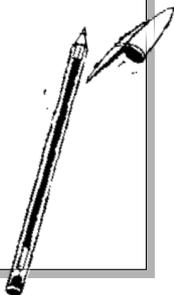
*See also Aims and objectives, Outcomes, Vision.*

## Recruitment

Enlisting the support of people for a project, or their membership of a group or organisation, is most likely to be effective if you:

- Put yourself in their shoes – what benefit are you offering them?
- Provide a chance for people to think through what is involved, perhaps in a small group.
- Ask existing members to bring friends along.

*See also Barriers to participation, Commitment.*



### Creating a statement of purpose

This may be done directly by working as individuals and a group on the statement, or by working up from options and objectives.

To create a statement directly

- Work individually to write down one or two sentences expressing your intention.
- Pool these and amalgamate by identifying areas of agreement, and discussing disagreements.

To work from options:

- Brainstorm specific ideas to achieve your aim.
- Summarise 8-10 of these on cards, with a paragraph description of each.
- As a group place them in order of priority.
- Reflect on the common theme which lies behind the projects, and the criteria you used to priorities.
- Develop the statement of purpose around the common theme, and a statement of values which reflects the criteria.

## Research

**Knowledge is a process of piling up facts; wisdom lies in their simplification.**

*Martin H. Fisher.*

The research you may need to do in planning and starting a participation process will depend in part of the level of participation you are considering.

For example:

- For levels of information and consultation you will need to research and prepare clear proposals early in the process to put to other interests.
  - If you are aiming for Deciding or Acting Together, it will be more appropriate to delay research into options until this can be agreed together.
  - If you are supporting community initiatives, you may wish to support other people's research.
- Whichever level you are working at it will be necessary to find out who are the key interests.

*See also Community, Stakeholder analysis.*

## Resources

In a participation process you may need two sets of resources: first the skills, money and equipment to run the process, and second, the resources for any project or organisation that develops from the process.

*See also Budgets for participation, Fundraising, Skills.*

## Role of the practitioner

**The go-between wears out a thousand sandals.**

*Japanese proverb.*

Much confusion arises when people are not clear about the intentions and responsibilities of practitioners involved in participation processes. For example 'enabler' sounds fine, but people will be mistrustful if they feel that as well as facilitating the discussion you are making decisions on who gets what resources, and have your own agenda. If you are seeking to empower people, it is particularly unhelpful to act as a spokesperson for a group negotiating with authorities, or to act as go-between. It prevents the different interests getting to know each other and developing mutual trust, and can lead to filtering of information and closing options.

*See also Enabling.*

## Roles in groups

One of the many benefits of working in a group is to be able to share responsibilities with different people undertaking different

parts of the work. You may all want to have an equal say, but even groups that work as collectives find it easier to have different individuals taking responsibility for co-ordinating a particular area of work. Whilst every organisation has different needs and different roles, the following checklist may be useful.

### Group roles checklist

- Chairperson for the main committee.
  - Secretary.
  - Chairperson for working groups.
  - Treasurer.
  - Spokesperson.
  - Publicity officer.
  - Meetings organiser.
  - Volunteers organiser.
  - Work co-ordinator.
  - Administrator.
- You may want to rotate some of these roles around the group.

## Roles of participants

Marilyn Taylor, of the School for Advanced Urban Studies, suggests that in planning participation a local authority should see those involved in three possible roles:

- As citizens who have certain political rights and duties, including the right to vote. As such they have an interest in every part of the policies and operation of any authority.
- As paymasters, people contribute a significant amount of the authority's finances and have a right to call the authority to account for the way it spends their money.
- As consumers, people use different services paid for by the local authority and sometimes provided by them (e.g. parks, education, highways, leisure, libraries, housing, waste disposal etc).

## Shop front

A temporary office or shop front in the community you are working with shows commitment to meeting people on their own terms, rather than in meetings you have arranged. It provides an independent address and contact for any project. However, be careful that:

- The shop front doesn't substitute for the substance of what you are trying to achieve.
- You can afford the cost and have people to staff it.
- You aren't setting up a problem for someone else to take over.

## Auditing skills

In order to find out what talent you have:

- 1 List the tasks you have to carry out in as much detail as possible, using a brainstorming session if necessary.
- 2 Choose 10 random tasks and ask each member of the group to:
  - Score each task 1 (no good) to 5 (very good) on how good they would be.
  - State what they would need to do to become very good (e.g. practice, training).
- 3 Pull your ideas together, and for each item list:
  - Who can do it, and how well.
  - What would be involved in getting more people competent.

## Skills Audit

You may need to look no further than your own group for the expertise you need for your project or campaign.

## Small Group

Large meetings and committees are not good for working through difficult issues. You can often make a lot more progress by taking some time out in smaller groups and reporting back.

## Breaking into groups

In order to allow members of a large group a say:

- 1 Introduce the issue to the large group, and set tasks for smaller groups. State time limits, how to report back, and arrange where each group should go.
  - 2 Break into smaller groups of not more than 6 to 8. Meet and discuss the issue. Appoint a facilitator, recorder, reporter if necessary.
  - 3 Report back to the large group.
  - 4 As an alternative reshuffle into new small groups and report back to each other within the groups
- Summarised from Resource Manual for Living Revolution.

## Socials

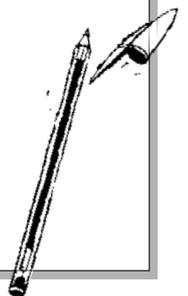
Among the committee meetings and workshop sessions allow time for social events where people can get to know each informally. People are far more likely to get involved in something which is fun.

## Solutions

**Simple solutions are like a bunch of spare keys. They seldom work.**

*Anon.*

Solutions have to be custom-made for the problems they are going to unlock. They are reached by clarifying the problem, having ideas and generating options, and then decision making.



The book *101 Ways to Generate Great Ideas* has a section on Techniques to Develop Solutions. Most are oriented to commercial development; generally useful methods include:

- What words of praise will be said when you have a solution?
- List the attributes a solution may have, before trying to see it in total.
- Suggest a metaphor for the problem.
- Reverse the situation, then reverse the problem.

See also *Clarifying problems, Destruction testing, Options, and the Easy Answers section.*

## Special events

Special events and festivals are one way to reach people who are not interested in formal meetings. Possibilities include parades, bringing in community artists, making models, holding exhibitions, getting school children involved through art work, drama or music, friendly competitions, involving local shops and businesses in events.

Special events bring fun and celebration into participation. However, they require lots of allies in order to plan and carry them.

See also *Allies.*

## Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who have an interest in what you are or may be doing, because they will be affected or may have some influence. For example:

- Who will benefit from your proposals?
- Who may be adversely affected?
- Who may help or hinder?
- Who may have skills, money or other resources?
- Who decides?

## Stance

One of the most important decisions to be made in a participation process is the level of involvement offered to the various interests by whoever initiates the process – for example,

Consultation or Acting Together. Stance is the suggestion or assertion that a particular level is appropriate – which may not be generally accepted. For example, a local authority may start a consultation process but find that residents want more say. Negotiating stances is an important early stage of a participation process. See the section *Where do you stand?*

### Deciding your stance

In deciding where you stand consider:

- What level of participation are other interests likely to consider appropriate?
- What level will your colleagues or others in your group accept or support?
- What skills and resources will be needed? Will you be able to follow through?
- Will you change your stance if others don't accept it?

## Start where people are at

If you really want to involve as many people as possible, you have to go to them rather than expect them to come to you. That means:

- Going to their place rather than yours – homes, clubs, pubs, churches, mosques, Chambers of Commerce.
- Starting with other people's concerns rather than your own.

See also *Access, Special events.*

## Staying involved

People need to experience some benefit or encouragement if they are to stay involved. The study *Limbering Up* found people stopped being involved because of:

- Disagreements.
- Nothing being achieved.
- Having no real say.
- Domination by a clique.

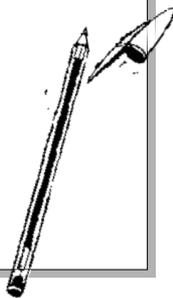
They were encouraged by:

- Feeling they would be effective.
- Experiencing success.
- Seeing peers involved.
- Feelings of personal benefit.

See also *Conflict resolution, Cliques, Confidence, Success.*

## Steering group

If you are at the level of participation of Acting Together, and aiming to create a formal partnership, it may be appropriate to set up a steering group which is a 'shadow' of the



### Stakeholder analysis

In order to think through the role of stakeholders:

- Consider who the key stakeholders are.
- Put yourself in their shoes: how are they likely to react?
- How might you wish them to react?
- What do you need to do to involve or influence them?
- Draw this up on a flip chart.

Who?	What is their likely attitude?	What response or change do you want?	What has to be done?
Stakeholder	Attitude	Response	Action

management committee or Board that you will be creating later. Adopt similar procedures for the steering group that you will use for the management committee – that should help ensure that early decisions are taken in the interests of the partnership, rather than simply the self interests of the various representatives.

See also *Board, Management Committee, Team building, Terms of reference.*

## SAST

Strategic Assumption Surface Testing is a technique for a large group to examine different options for action and then develop a common action plan.

## Strategic choice

Strategic choice is a sophisticated technique for making decisions and developing action plans in situations with many options and uncertainties. This can be done in a workshop session, or using Strategic Choice software – STRAD – available from Stradspan Limited. Strategic choice works through four modules:

- Shaping, where the main areas for making decisions are identified in order to provide a problem focus.
  - Designing, where you start to explore ways forward by seeing which combinations of options from decision areas could be combined.
  - Comparing, where the implications of different paths through the strategic problem are assessed.
  - Choosing, where you review what to do about key areas of uncertainty and move towards action plans.
- The book *Planning Under Pressure* provides a detailed description.

## Structures for participation

Organisations like local authorities often favour participation methods which fit their own way of working – so they invite people to join committees, or set up other structures. Jerry Smith, of the Community Development Foundation, suggests there are five main classes of organisation used by local authorities:

- 1 Consultative bodies.
- 2 Councillor bodies usually based on wards or other local authority administrative divisions.
- 3 Joint bodies composed of councillors and community representatives.
- 4 Narrow-range community organisations like tenant co-operatives, community housing associations, and community economic development trusts.

## Running SAST

- 1 The group splits into small groups and each takes an option to consider. The task of each group is to 'sell' its option in an uncritical 15 minute presentation to the other groups.
- 2 As each group makes its presentation the facilitator notes the main points on two charts, one headed 'actions' one headed 'advantages'.
- 3 After each presentation the audience questions and criticises, and these points are recorded on a third chart headed 'debate'.
- 4 The three sets of charts are exhibited, and

there is a final discussion to bring ideas together and plan next steps.

uring the final discussion

- The common 'actions' are turned into an action plan.
- The 'advantages' are translated into agreed criteria.
- The issues of 'debate' are clustered and treated as areas of uncertainty which may require further investigation.
- Activities to investigate these uncertainties may be transferred to the action plan.

- 5 Broad-range community associations such as neighbourhood and community councils.

## Choosing a structure

Issues to consider in choosing a form of organisation include:

- Geography.
- Relationship to the political system.
- The relationship with new and existing bodies.
- Balance of community and local authority representation.
- The level of participation offered.
- Formal status of the organisation.
- Method of operation.

See also *Community forum, Community initiatives, Development Trusts.*

## Success

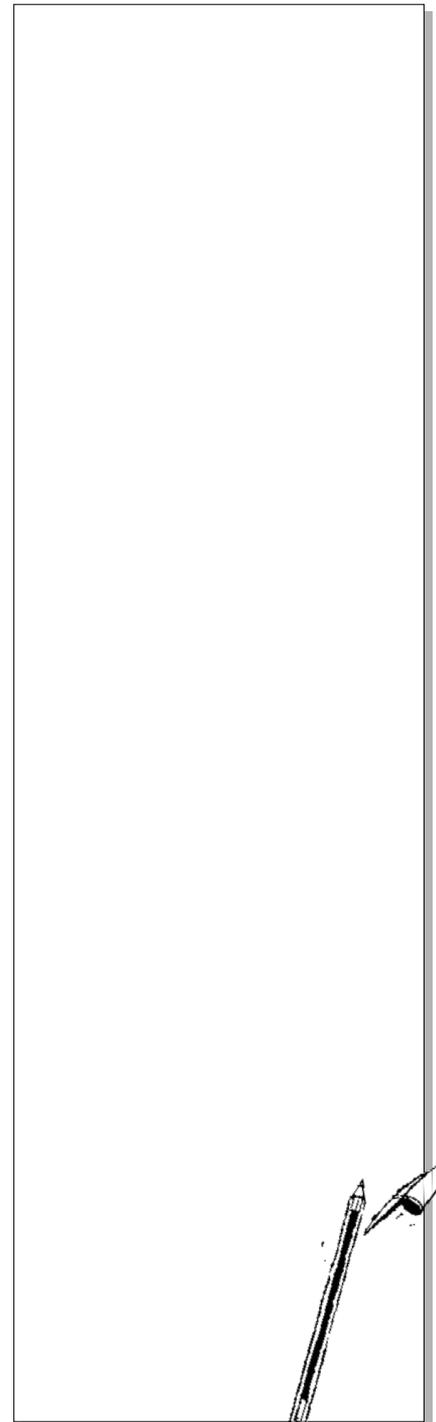
Success may take many forms in a participation process. Ultimately it may be associated with some 'product' – achieving your aims and objectives, or purpose. It may also be about a successful process – meeting deadlines and targets along the way, ensuring that people are staying involved.

See also *Criteria, Outcomes.*

## Supporting independent community initiatives

Supporting community based initiatives means helping others develop and carry out their own plans. You can, of course, put limits on what you will support. It is the most 'empowering' level of participation – provided people want to do things for themselves. They may, quite properly, choose a lower level of participation. Supporting community initiatives is appropriate:

- Where there is a commitment to empower individuals or groups within the community.
- Where people are interested in starting and



running an initiative.  
It is unlikely to be appropriate when:

- Community initiatives are seen as 'a good thing' in the abstract and pushed on people from the top down.
- Where there aren't the resources to maintain initiatives in the longer-term.

See the section *Where do you stand?* for more detailed discussion.

## Surveys

Surveys provide an important starting point for participation processes. Whether they enable people to participate significantly in decision making, and subsequent action, depends very much on the way they are done:

- Questionnaire surveys – whether conducted by interviewers or completed by respondents – may be improved if local groups are involved in the design, collection and analysis. *Village Appraisals* are designed and carried out by local groups, who may then use the results to press for action or to start their own projects.

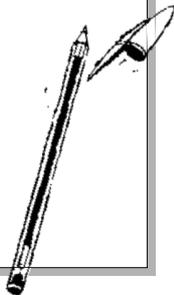
- *Parish maps* have provided the starting point for a large number of rural and urban projects. They offer wide scope for involvement because of the many ways in which they can be developed, and the focus on familiar features in the locality.

- *Priority Search* uses a focus group, representative of those to be surveyed, to generate ideas which become part of the survey questionnaire. However, taking action rests with the local authority or other body commissioning the survey.

See the book *Creating Involvement* for discussion of these and other survey techniques, and items mentioned above.

## SWOT

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It's a good



### Using SWOT

When you are clear what your aim is:

- 1 Brainstorm issues under each heading. Strengths and weaknesses relate to internal matters for the group or organisation, opportunities and threats to the external. Divide up a chart, and ask people to fill in and stick on Post-it notes.
- 2 Draw up a summary and discuss how to build on your strengths, do something about your weaknesses. make the most of the opportunities, avoid or eliminate the threats.
- 3 Turn these conclusions into an Action plan.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>

workshop technique for starting to plan a participation process, or review where you are.

## Team building

The process of helping a group of people develop shared aims and objectives, values and a plan for putting them into action. People working together have more opportunities to get to know each other than, for example, members of a management committee meeting every month or two – so team building workshops can be particularly useful.

Most techniques for developing ideas and making decisions together will help with team building, because they help people understand each other's interests and priorities. Similarly techniques specifically designed for team building can be useful in participation processes.

See the book *Planning Together*.

## Techniques

The term is used here to describe any short-term device which helps make progress in a participation process. This may be a brainstorming workshop, a task like writing a leaflet to help clarify what you are trying to achieve, or a more complex game or simulation.

Techniques are particularly useful for consultant, facilitators and trainers because:

- They are discrete pieces of work with clear preparation and results.
- If used well, everyone gets a sense that things have moved forward.
- They are a good way of breaking out of conventional committees and public meetings which may not have worked in the past. However, techniques should not be seen as 'quick fixes', but as milestones in a long term process. If people feel they are being manipulated, or made to 'jump through hoops' they will avoid further involvement or oppose further activities.

### Choosing a technique

In order to decide on a technique, using this guide:

- Browse through the A to Z to get an overview of possibilities.
- Review the level of participation and your stance, and the techniques recommended as appropriate.
- Review the phase of process, and recommended techniques.
- Use the Guidelines on how to... section.
- Read 'Easy answers' for some cautionary comments on techniques.

## Terms of reference

Any subcommittee or working group should have clear terms of reference covering:

- The purpose and membership of the group.
- Who services it with agendas and minutes.
- How often it meets – and for how long.
- The topics or issues the group covers.
- The powers of the group to make decisions.
- What funding it has, if any.
- To which committee or group it reports back.

See *Just About Managing?* for a longer discussion.

## Time Line

**It takes time to save time.**

*Joe Taylor.*

Everything takes longer than you think – even when you know it does. Drawing a timeline is a simple technique to set priorities among activities and events which must be completed within a given period of time

- Draw a horizontal line on a piece of paper.
- Graduate it into appropriate blocks of time (days, weeks, months). The first mark is NOW, the last the completion date.
- Think of all the tasks to be completed.
- Place the tasks on the time line in the order of when they have to be done, and which are the most important to do at a particular time.

See also *Workload planning*.

## Trading company

Charities cannot engage in income-generating trading unless it is pursuit of their objectives. They can, however, set up subsidiary trading companies which covenant profits back to the charity. If you are considering this type of arrangement consult a solicitor and an accountant experienced in the field.

## Trust

The most brilliant presentation will achieve little if the audience suspects they are being misled – and workshop techniques will fail if people feel they are being manipulated. Trust is an essential foundation for all aspects of participation.

In order to develop trust:

- Draw out and deal with any suspicions from past contacts.
- Be open and honest about what you are trying to achieve – and about any problems.
- Be prepared to make mistakes – and admit them.

- Meet people informally.
- Deliver what you promise.

## Values

Values are statements of what we consider important. Since they may be emotive, political, and difficult to express, they are frequently hidden. However it is difficult to understand each other or reach agreement if we are unclear about values. For example, council officers faced with a tight project timetable may be frustrated by a community group which insists on numerous meetings, held in the evenings, leading to the appointment of a representative steering group.

The officers value cost-effective delivery of 'product' acceptable to their political masters and the Government; the community group values openness and democratic process. In groups where there may be underlying differences of values it is often most productive to concentrate first on what there is in common by discussing outcomes – what you would like to happen at the end of the day – and how you can get there. A group which has agreed aims and objectives may explore shared values by considering the image it wishes to present.

See also *Aims and objectives, Criteria, Identity and Image, Outcomes, Purpose*.

## Videos

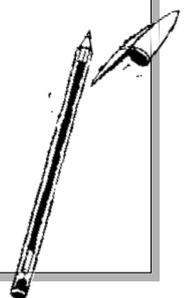
At first sight video might seem a powerful medium for launching an initiative, but it can be costly and inflexible if you have to pay a professional team. A well-scripted slide show is cheaper, easy to change, and gives you personal contact with the audience. Slide shows and twin-projector audio-visual presentations can be transferred to video. These don't compare with professional videos, but save carrying the equipment around to small groups.

See also *Communication*.

## Village appraisals

This is a technique promoted by ACRE – Action for Communities in Rural England – through which local people use surveys to take stock of village life and encourage action by both volunteers and local authorities. A format has been established for local residents to carry out surveys of the services and facilities in rural areas, and there is computer software available. ACRE suggest a 12 stage process to use this:

- 1 Form a steering group
- 2 Decide the aims of the appraisal, and the area to be covered.



- 3** Consider how you plan to fund the project.
  - 4** Draw up a realistic timescale and consider publicity.
  - 5** Familiarise yourself with the software.
  - 6** Decide on the issues that are important to your community and list them.
  - 7** Use the 'menu' of questions from the software to design a questionnaire.
  - 8** Print, distribute and collect the questionnaire.
  - 9** Use the software to make a first analysis.
  - 10** Review the aims of the appraisal and produce a report with recommendations for action.
  - 11** Launch the report, and decide on the authorities to negotiate with.
  - 12** Review the situation after a year to see how things are progressing.
- Contact ACRE for further information.

## Vision

**You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream things that never were, and I say 'Why not?'**

*George Bernard Shaw*

The idea of a vision of the future seems to me rather broader than purpose or mission, because it places more emphasis on values and approach – how you do things as well as the result you achieve. Vision may be a helpful term if you are using participation techniques that encourage people to create pictures of what they want, or develop models.

*See also Limits, Outcomes.*

## Voluntary sector

This blanket term is often used to cover a wide range of organisations which are very different from each other:

- Self-help groups of people with a shared interest seeking to assist each other.
- Community groups of activists concerned with a locality or local issue.
- Small local charitable organisations with management committees and paid workers.
- National charities with local branches.
- Bodies like development trusts which may see themselves as not-for-profit companies. Each will have its own style of working, and community of interest. Although a very important route to these communities, they should not be seen as representing 'the community'.

*See also Community.*



## Voting

Seeking a standard committee-style majority vote on a major issue is not an effective means of involving people in participation processes. However, simple voting techniques can be useful in small groups to decide between options.

### Voting by ticks

For a group to decide quickly between different options or solutions:

- 1** List the possible options.
- 2** Make sure they are understood by everyone.
- 3** Give each voter ten ticks (or small sticky labels) to mark his or her choices. These can be spread through the list or allocated to one choice.
- 4** The item with the most ticks or labels wins.

From Getting Organised.

## Why encourage participation?

Marilyn Taylor, of the School of Advanced Urban Studies, offers the following reasons for local councils and other authorities to consider promoting participation:

- Legislation or central government encouragement. A number of Acts impose consultation requirements, and many funding programmes also specify community involvement.
- Dissatisfaction with public service delivery has led to government seeking to remove services from local government control; councils have responded with decentralisation and devolution of powers which involve participation.
- Efficiency and effectiveness may be improved by involving the community and consumers. At the very least it forestalls conflict and can more positively bring new ideas, perspectives and resources into policy making and problem solving. Resources can be better targeted.
- Consumers are demanding involvement. These days people are more likely to take action on issues of concern to them.

*See also Benefits of participation.*

## Working groups

A working group is a small group set up with a specific task to complete, with members chosen for their appropriate skills. Working groups are a good way of making sure interested people can get involved and make a contribution. In setting up working groups:

- Create clear terms of reference.
- Set a limit on how long they continue.
- Encourage creative thinking rather than formal committee procedures.

See also *Creative thinking*, *Time line*.

## Workload planning

This technique – which combines action plans with a time line can be useful in planning participation process.

### Workload planning

- 1** Set up a calendar of days, weeks or months for the process, with the period across the top of a sheet of paper.
- 2** Identify main events like meetings and publications as 'milestones' in the process, and position them as on a time line.
- 3** Work out the subsidiary tasks to achieve the milestones, including which must be started before or after others.
- 4** Draw these under each other as lines across the calendar, the length of line indicating time to complete, with start and finish points marked.
- 5** Allocate responsibilities.

Project management computer software is available to carry out workload planning, but can be rather time-consuming to use.

See the book *Planning Together*, Activity 30, for a fuller description.

See also *Time line*.

## Workshops

Workshops are meetings at which a small group, perhaps aided by a facilitator, explore issues, develop ideas and make decisions. They are the less formal and more creative counterpart to public meetings and committees. As well as generating a lot of useful content, workshops provide a good opportunity for all concerned to get to know each other better – something which seldom happens at more formal meetings.

See the book *Creating Involvement for descriptions of different types of workshops*.

## Yes or No

Spencer Johnson in *Yes or No: A Guide to Better Decisions* uses an extended journey metaphor for decision-making processes and offers a technique for making decisions which is similar to Kolb's cycle, and Plan, Act, Review. He argues that it is important to take decisions using both head and heart. With the head consider:

- Are you meeting a real need?
- Have you developed and thought through options?

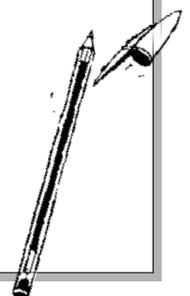
## Workshop guidelines

When running a workshop session:

- 1** Plan space and equipment:
  - Wall space or stands for charts.
  - Space for separate group working.
  - Coloured pens, Post-it notes, chart paper and blutack, coloured stickers/stars.
- 2** Agree with participants what is going to happen in the session
- 3** If using charts or handouts, check literacy and colour-blindness. Working in pairs or small groups can help to overcome problems.
- 4** Stick to an agreed timetable – keep an eye on the clock.
- 5** Write clearly, and encourage others to write on the charts – but don't force them.
- 6** Encourage work in small group (3-5), even if there is a lot of talking and input in the whole group sessions.
- 7** Speak clearly, and listen carefully to what people are saying – both in groups and in plenary sessions.
- 8** Check out understanding before writing on charts.
- 9** Be happy to make mistakes and admit them.
- 10** Don't establish yourself as the expert. Ask naive questions.

With the heart, ask:

- Am I being honest, and trusting my intuition?
- Do I deserve better?



# Useful publications

In researching this guide I found few publications which deal specifically with participation and partnership. Not surprisingly, books of relevant techniques are fewer still.

The references below are some of the main sources of information and inspiration I found in developing theory and finding examples of techniques. Please send me your own favourites for inclusion in a later edition of the guide.

Details of organisations mentioned can be found in the next section, including some distributors.

## 101 ways to generate great ideas.

*Timothy R. V. Foster, Kogan Page, 1991.*  
A consultant lists 101 ways to understand problems, generate ideas in groups, develop solutions and evaluate which to use.

## Awareness through to action.

*Newcastle Architecture Workshop, 1992.*  
A pack containing scores of techniques for achieving participation in environmental projects and the design process. Useful for work in schools, training for professionals and with community groups.

## A-Z of meetings.

*Sue Ward, Pluto Press, 1985.*  
Reflects the author's experience in the trade union movement and Labour Party, and is strong on the formalities of constitutions, rules, and standing orders.

## Building effective local partnerships.

*Local Government Management Board, 1993.*  
Guidelines based on case studies of partnerships, aimed at both local authorities and voluntary bodies with whom they may develop partnership arrangements.

## Change and how to help it happen.

*Community Education Training Unit, 1994.*  
A comprehensive and practical guide to facilitation methods for organisational change. The approach and methods can be adapted for participation processes.

## Citizen action: taking action in your community.

*Des Wilson with Leighton Andrews and Maurice Frankel, Longman, 1986.*  
The nuts and bolts of organising a local campaign.

## Citizen involvement: a practical guide for change.

*Peter Beresford and Suzy Croft, Macmillan, 1993.*

A guide to participation and empowerment which focuses on initiatives in social work and social services. Plenty of insights from service users as well as practitioners, and guidelines for agencies.

## Community enterprise from the bottom up.

*Edited by Nick Love, Lincolnshire Wolds Publications, 1993.*

Case studies and advice on creating local community-based enterprises.

## Community involvement in City Challenge.

*Richard MacFarlane, NCVO, 1993.*  
A good practice guide based on case studies of City Challenge projects. Provides insights into the problems of achieving participation against tight timetables and Treasury funding procedures.

## Community profiling: a guide to identifying local needs.

*Paul Burton, School for Advanced Urban Studies, 1993.*  
Provides a 10-step practical guide to developing a community profile which is defined as 'a social, environmental and economic description of a given area which is used to inform local decision-making.'

## Consensus-building.

*Andrew Floyer Acland, The Environment Council, 1992.*  
Booklet on 'how to reach agreement by consent in multi-party, multi-issue situations.' Describes a five stage process: Assessment, Initiation, Meetings, Decisions, Making the Solutions Work. Free – call the Council.

## Creating Development Trusts.

*Diane Warburton and David Wilcox, HMSO, 1988.*  
Case studies of joint public, private, community organisations concerned with area conservation and renewal. Also outlines the start up process for a trust, and elements of good practice.

## Creating involvement.

*Environment Trust Associates, Local Government Management Board, 1994.*  
A handbook on participation techniques, covering some of the same ground as this guide. Provides more detailed guidance on, for example, workshops, surveys, and Planning for Real.

The Local Government Management Board is also producing a series of free papers on community participation and other issues relating to Agenda 21 – the programme being developed by local authorities following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

## Croner's Management of Voluntary Organisations.

*Croner Publications, 1989 plus quarterly updates.*  
Substantial compendium of management advice, aimed at staffed voluntary organisations.

## Designing your own simulations.

*Ken Jones, Methuen, 1985.*  
Aimed mainly at teachers, but the approach is more widely applicable.

## Getting organised: a handbook for non-statutory organisations.

*Christine Holloway and Shirley Otto, Bedford Square Press, 1985.*

The authors write that: 'The purpose of this book is to help you bring about changes which will improve the effectiveness of your organisation.' It does this by raising key management issues and providing checklists and exercises.

## Getting to yes.

*Roger Fisher and William Ury, Hutchinson, 1981.*

A classic work on negotiation with applications spanning personal relationships, work and international diplomacy. Key elements of the method are: Separate the people from the problem; Focus on interests, not positions; Invent options for mutual gain; Insist on objective criteria. It deals with What if they are more powerful? What if they won't play? What if they use dirty tricks?

## How to make meetings work.

*Malcolm Peel, Kogan Page, 1988.*  
Covers planning for meetings, how groups work, different roles, formal procedures, legal issues, and conferences. Brief section on 'special meetings' for brainstorming, negotiation, therapy, training, and a section on conferences.

## How to solve your problems.

*Brenda Rogers, Sheldon Press, 1991.*  
Counsellor and teacher deals with problems from the personal perspective, using techniques also relevant to groups and organisations. For example, chapters include Defining and clarifying the Problem; Collecting information; Creative thinking; Generating more ideas; Making decisions; Putting your decisions into action.

## Influencing with integrity.

*Genie Z. Laborde, Syntony Publishing, 1983.*  
Early application of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) by a US communication consultant. Provides a theoretical basis for advice on how to establish rapport with your audience, clarify the outcomes you are seeking, read body language, interpret responses, and run meetings effectively.

## Introduction to neuro-linguistic programming.

*Joseph O'Connor and John Seymour, Thorsons Publishing Group, 1990.*  
A more detailed description of NLP, its psychological basis and use of linguistic analysis. Deals with the underlying processes of communication.

## Just about managing?

*Sandy Adirondack, London Voluntary Service Council, 1992.*  
Best-selling guide to effective management for voluntary organisations and community groups. Covers all the main issues, with lots of checklists.

### **Limbering up.**

*Ann Holmes, Radical Improvements for Peripheral Estates, 1992.*

Study of community empowerment on housing estates, with a strong focus on the issues of confidence, communication and capacity. Twenty of the issues are analysed in detail, with accompanying exercises to tackle problems.

### **Local authorities and community development: a strategic opportunity for the 1990s.**

*Association of Metropolitan Authorities, 1993.*

Recommendations on how local authorities can develop strategic plans and practical action to secure greater community involvement in service delivery. Prepared by a joint working party representing local authorities and community organisations.

### **Making it happen: a user's guide to the Neighbourhood Action Packs.**

*Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation.*

A description of how to use three dimensional models and other back-up materials to involve communities in decision-making. Written by Tony Gibson who has pioneered Planning for Real. NIF has produced about 40 packs and publications guided by the philosophy that the people who live and work in neighbourhoods are the real experts.

### **Managing yourself.**

*Mike Pedler and Tom Boydell, Fontana, 1985.*

Written for 'the thinking manager' by consultants who specialise in management education and development. Based on the belief that 'you cannot manage others unless you are able to manage yourself - to be proactive, rather than allowing yourself to be buffeted and controlled by events and other people.' To that might be added that you can't empower other people unless you are empowered yourself.

### **Manual for action.**

*Martin Jeffs, Action Resources Group, 1982.*

Sub-titled 'Techniques to enable groups engaged in action for change to increase their effectiveness'. The first edition, published in 1977, grew out of concern with training for non-violent action. The later edition, revised by Sandy Merritt, contains over 120 techniques. Unfortunately difficult to find.

### **Organising in voluntary and community groups.**

*National Extension College, 1992.*

This title covers two sets of linked materials produced by NEC: a set of distance learning materials by Anne Stamper for people following the RSA advanced diploma in the organisation of community groups, plus a resource pack by Roger Gomm and Minna Ireland.

### **Organising things: a guide to successful political action.**

*Sue Ward, Pluto Press, 1984.*

How to organise public meetings, marches and demonstrations, lobbies, petitions, conferences, festivals. Written for campaigners, useful on other fronts as well.

### **Participation – a tenants' handbook.**

*Liz Cairncross, David Clapham, Robina Goodlad. Tenant Participation Advisory Service, 1990.*

Written for "tenants' groups and other tenants who may be trying to have more say over what happens to their homes and estates." Distinguishes different levels of participation from listening to control, and deals with some of the methods for involvement which may be used by landlords.

### **Planning Together: the art of effective teamwork.**

*George Gawlinski and Lois Graessle, Bedford Square Press, 1988.*

Presents a theoretical model for co-operative planning by any group of people working together as a team, and a step-by-step approach with exercises. Chapters on Taking stock; Developing and sharing a vision; Linking values, policies and strategies; Prioritising aims; Setting objectives; Getting organised and staying organised; Evaluating progress. The model and exercises can be adapted for participation processes.

### **Planning under pressure: the strategic choice approach.**

*John Friend and Allen Hickling, Pergamon Press, 1987*

A comprehensive account of the strategic choice approach to planning, problem-solving and decision-making. Powerful, but not for the beginner.

### **Practical problem solving for managers.**

*Michael Stevens, British Institute of Management, Kogan Page, 1988.*

The author defines problems as 'situations in which we experience uncertainty or difficulty in achieving what we want to achieve' and offers the equation 'objective + obstacle = PROBLEM.' He covers defining problems; generating ideas; solving problems in groups; evaluating solutions; and getting your solution accepted. Includes useful exercises and checklists.

### **Pressure: the A to Z of campaigning in Britain.**

*Des Wilson. Heinemann, 1984.*

A practical guide to running campaigns by one of the most successful campaigners of the 1970s and 80s. Mainly about national campaigns, but also readable and relevant for local groups. See also *Citizen Action*.

### **Rational analysis for a problematic world.**

*Edited by Jonathan Rosenhead, Wiley, 1989.*

Brings together in relatively accessible form 'super techniques' for problem solving like Cognitive Mapping, Soft Systems Methodology and Strategic Choice.

### **Reinventing government.**

*David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, Addison Wesley, 1992.*

Contains many examples of new entrepreneurial approaches to national and local government in the US and is, apparently, required reading among Ministers and senior Civil Servants here.

### **Resource manual for a living revolution.**

*Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser, Christopher Moore. New Society Publishers, 1985.*

US classic developed by people involved in non-violent social action in the 1970s 'for people who are concerned or angered by the deterioration of our society and who, because they have some sense that their efforts can have an effect for change, are looking for tools to transform it.' Relevant to campaigning and practical action. Sections cover the theoretical basis for change; working in groups; developing communities of support; personal growth; consciousness raising; training and education; organising for change; exercises and other tools; and practical skills.

### **Signposts to community development.**

*Marilyn Taylor, Community Development Foundation, 1992.*

Makes community development understandable in under 40 pages: a considerable achievement.

### **Tenant participation in housing management.**

*Institute of Housing and Tenant Participation Advisory Service, 1989.*

A guide to good practice based on research undertaken by Glasgow University. Covers the legal requirements of participation in housing; the pattern of participation found in research; the process; the participants; outcomes and achievements; and standards and performance.

### **The innovator's handbook.**

*Vincent Nolan, Penguin, 1989.*

A volume which brings together books on problem solving, communication and teamwork written by the chairman of consultants Synectics Limited.

### **The Tao of Leadership.**

*John Heider, Wildwood House, 1985.*

The author takes the 2500-year-old Chinese classic the Tao Te Ching - source of 'The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step' - and shows its relevance for leaders (and facilitators) today. A reminder that little is new.

### **Training and how not to panic.**

*Community Education Training Unit, 1992.*

A set of practical guidelines for people involved in training work with community groups, voluntary organisations and local authorities. Covers setting up and planning training events; running the training; exercises and role plays; doubts and difficulties.

### **Training and how to enjoy it.**

*Community Education Training Unit, 1989.*

A collection of training exercises devised by people working in and for community groups and voluntary organisations. The exercises cover groups and meetings; publicity and campaigning; equal opportunities; finance and funding; planning and problem solving.

### **Understanding organisations.**

*Charles Handy, Penguin, 1993.*

Charles Handy is the most accessible of the management gurus. He is always readable,

understands the voluntary sector, and puts people first. This book deals with key issues like culture, motivation, leadership, power and so offers insights into what makes organisations participatory or non-participatory. *Understanding Voluntary Organisations* is also available in Penguin.

#### **Using management games.**

*Chris Elgood, Gower, 1990.*

Guidance on developing training games, simulation and exercises.

#### **Voluntary but not amateur.**

*Duncan Forbes, Ruth Hayes and Jacki Reason, London Voluntary Service Council, 1990.*

A guide to the law for voluntary organisations and community groups covering responsibilities as an organisation; employment; premises; insurance; fundraising; accounts; public activities; computers; facing closure.

#### **Working effectively.**

*Warren Feek, Bedford Square Press, 1988.*

How to improve an organisation's self-awareness, motivation, performance (and appeal to funders) by using evaluation techniques.

#### **Yes or no: the guide to better decisions.**

*Spencer Johnson, Harper Collins, 1992.*

Neatly uses the analogy of a journey to illustrate the main processes of decision-making. See *Yes or no* in the A-Z section.

#### **Your organisation: what is it for?**

*John Argenti, McGraw Hill, 1993.*

Argues strongly that all organisations must identify beneficiaries, set performance indicators which ensure value is delivered to them, and create governing bodies which represent their interests.

## Useful organisation

#### **ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)**

*Somerford Court,  
Somerford Road,  
Cirencester  
Gloucestershire GL7 1TW  
tel: 0285 653477*

The national contact point for 38 county-based Rural Community Councils.

#### **Association of Community Technical Aid Centres (ACTAC)**

*64 Mount Pleasant,  
Liverpool L3 5SD  
tel: 051 708 7607*

ACTAC provides training, consultancy and project support to local groups as well as representing a national network of professionals who provide local technical support.

#### **Association of Community Trusts and Foundations**

*High Holborn House,  
52-54 High Holborn,  
London WC1V 6RL  
tel: 071 831 0033*

The national body representing fundraising and grant-making *Community Trusts*.

#### **Association of Metropolitan Authorities**

*35 Great Smith Street,  
London SW1P 3BJ  
tel: 071 222 8100*

Represents metropolitan local authorities. Published a recent report on local authorities and community development – see *Useful Publications*.

#### **Civic Trust Regeneration Unit**

*17 Carlton House Terrace,  
London SW1Y 5AW.  
tel: 071 930 0914*

The Unit runs a Winning Partnerships programme as well offering consultancy on urban regeneration partnerships.

#### **Community Development Foundation**

*60 Highbury Grove,  
London N5 2AG  
tel: 071 226 5375*

A non-departmental public body which aims to strengthen communities by influencing policy, promoting best practice and supporting community initiatives.

#### **Community Education Development Centre**

*Lyng Hall,  
Blackberry Lane,  
Coventry CV2 3JS  
tel: 0203 638660*

The national focus for community education in the UK. Their Resources catalogue is a useful mail order source of books and other materials in the field.

#### **Community Education Training Unit**

*Arden Road,  
Halifax HX1 3AG  
tel: 0422 357394*

Produces excellent packs on training and facilitation.

#### **Community Land and Workspace Services (CLAWS)**

*61 - 71 Collier St,  
London N1 9DF.  
tel: 071 833 2909*

Gives building, landscape design and architectural advice to community groups. See *Design Game* in the A-Z section.

#### **Community Matters**

*8/9 Upper Street,  
London N1 OPQ.  
tel: 071 226 0189*

A membership network of 800 local community organisations, providing information, advice, and training.

#### **Community Operational Research Unit**

*Northern College,  
Wentworth Castle,  
Stainborough,  
Barnsley S75 3ET  
tel: 0226 285426*

Assists community groups by applying many of the techniques featured in this guide.

#### **Croner Publications Ltd**

*Croner House,  
London Road,  
Kingston upon Thames,  
Surrey KT2 6SR  
tel: 081 547 3333*

Publishers of Management of Voluntary Organisations.

#### **Development Trusts Association**

*20 Conduit Place,  
London W2 1HZ.  
tel: 071 706 4951*

The national umbrella organisation for community-based development organisations.

#### **Directory of Social Change**

*Radius Works,  
Back Lane,  
London NW3 1HL  
tel: 071 435 8171*

Independent national charity which runs a wide range of training courses and produces practical handbooks. Also produces a publications catalogue including some other titles quoted in this guide.

#### **Environment Council, The**

*21 Elizabeth Street,  
London SW1W 9RP  
tel: 071824 8411*

Runs training sessions and an Environmental Resolve consultancy programme of consensus building.

#### **Groundwork Foundation**

*85/87 Cornwall Street,  
Birmingham B3 3BY  
tel: 021 236 8565*

The Foundation funds and support a network of 34 local Groundwork Trusts, which are public, private and voluntary partnerships engaged in environmental work.

### **Information for Action Ltd**

PO Box 277,  
Brighton BN1 4PF  
tel: 0273 724575

A software consultancy which produces the specialist Cata-LIST database designed for community groups.

### **Lincolnshire Wolds Publications**

The Buttermarket,  
Caistor LN7 6UE.  
tel: 0472 851558

Publish *Community enterprise from the bottom up*.

### **Local Government Management Board**

Arndale House,  
Arndale Centre,  
Luton LU1 2TS  
tel: 0582 451166

Represents and supports local authorities through research, training and publications.

### **London Voluntary Service Council**

68 Chalton Street,  
London NW1 1JR  
tel: 071 388 0241

Publishes a number of the books on management of voluntary organisations mentioned in this guide.

### **National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service**

177 Arundel Court,  
Sheffield S1 2NU.  
tel: 0742 786636

Will provide details of your local Council for Voluntary Service, which will be a contact point for voluntary organisations in your area.

### **National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)**

8 Regents Wharf,  
All Saints Street,  
London N1 9LR  
tel: 071 713 6161

The national body for the voluntary sector.

### **National Extension College**

18 Brooklands Avenue,  
Cambridge CB2 2HN  
tel: 0223 316644

Publications and courses.

### **Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation**

The Poplars,  
Lightmoor,  
Telford TF3 3QN

tel: 0952 590777

See *Planning for Real* in the A-Z section. NIF

sells a range of packs and also offers consultancy support on participation.

### **Newcastle Architecture Workshop Ltd**

Blackfriars,  
Monk Street,  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4XN.  
tel: 091 261 7349

The workshop is an educational charity providing an environmental education and community technical aid and design service. See *Awareness through to action* under *Useful Publications*.

### **Partnership**

13 Pelham Square,  
Brighton BN1 4ET  
0273 677377

Offers consultancy and training on participation and partnership organisations; where you can contact the author of this guide.

### **Planning Aid for London**

Calvert House,  
5 Calvert Avenue,  
London E2 7JP.  
tel: 071 613 4435.

Provides advice on town planning issues and encourages people to become involved in shaping their environment. Can provide addresses of similar organisations elsewhere.

### **Priority Focus Team**

Town Hall,  
Surrey Street,  
Sheffield S1 2HH  
tel: 0742 734024

See *Priority Search* in the A-Z section.

### **Radical Improvements for Peripheral Estates (RIPE)**

C/o Middlesbrough Borough Council,  
First floor,  
Corporation House,  
Albert Road,  
Middlesbrough TS1 2RU.  
tel: 0642 245432

Published *Limbering up*, a study of community empowerment on peripheral housing estates.

### **Royal Institute of British Architects**

Community Architecture Resource Centre,  
66 Portland Place,  
London W1N 4AD  
tel: 071 580 5533.

The resource centre organises training for community groups developing building and environmental projects, and administers a fund for groups undertaking feasibility studies. Also supplies information on architects who will help groups.

### **School for Advanced Urban Studies**

Rodney Lodge,  
Grange Road,  
Bristol BS8 4EA  
tel: 0272 741117

Research, consultancy, training and publications, including work on issues of participation and partnership.

### **Shell Better Britain Campaign**

Red House,  
Hill Lane,  
Birmingham B43 5BR  
tel: 021 358 0744

A partnership of 15 organisations with Shell UK, providing information, grants and advice to local groups. The free Guide to a Better Britain is an excellent source of ideas and help about community-based environmental projects.

### **Standing Conference for Community Development**

356 Glossop Road,  
Sheffield S10 2HW  
tel: 0742 701718

A 'network of networks' for activists, paid workers and organisations in the field. Call for details and local contacts.

### **Stradspan Limited**

Sheffield Science Park,  
Arundel Street,  
Sheffield S1 2NS  
tel: 0742 724140

Supplies software for the *Strategic Choice* decision-making technique.

### **Tenant Participation Advisory Service**

48 The Crescent,  
Salford M5 4NY  
tel: 061 745 7903

The national organisation promoting and supporting tenant participation.

### **Volunteer Centre UK**

29 Lower Kings Road,  
Berkhamsted,  
Herts HP4 2AB  
tel: 0442 873311

Runs courses for people working with volunteers, provides help and advice to groups, and publishes useful materials.

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## **Guide to Effective Participation**

The Guide to Effective Participation, published in 1994, is now out of print.

However, you may print as many copies of the guide from these pdfs as you wish, provided that they are not sold or otherwise used commercially.

Please distribute the guide as a whole, or if you do use parts please give attribution.

If you would like to develop the materials in any way, please get in touch.... and if the guide is helpful, I would be glad to hear from you.

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