

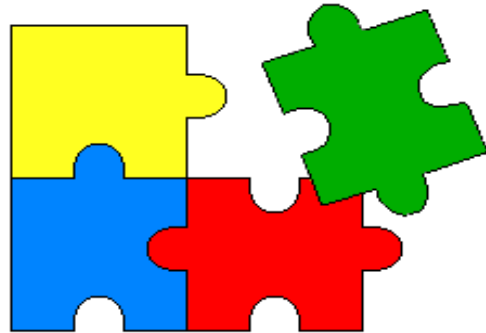
Dealing with Deeply Held Concerns and Organized Opposition in Public Engagement Activities

Highlights from
March 13, 2013
Webinar

www.ca-ilg.org/webinarbasics

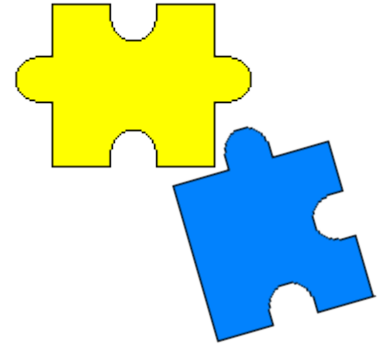


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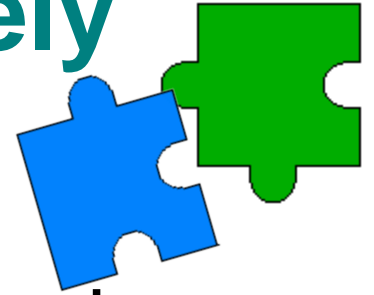
Purpose: To develop your capacity to design and implement public engagement processes with the greatest chance of success when there are strongly contested views and values.

Participants May Have Strongly Held Views About:



- The topics to be discussed
- The local agency and officials involved and/or
- The planning and/or public engagement process(es)

Think About Your Likely Participants



- What are their possible concerns and interests?
- Are there assumptions/gaps in information?
- What are their past experiences in other settings?
- How may they view an opportunity for public engagement?

Plan, Prepare, and Provide Information



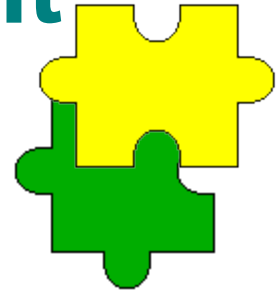
- Offer opportunities for early process input and co-sponsorship
- Strive for speakers and participants to reflect diverse population & viewpoints
- Endure sponsor and facilitator clarity about meeting process & strategy
- Plan for/prepare impartial mtg. facilitators
- Prepare for “What if...”

Design an Appropriate Process

- Provide info & opportunities for learning to address information gaps
- Cover underlying “policy” history and scope of jurisdiction’s role/possible actions
- Offer multiple ways for public to ask questions and share comments (before, during and after)
- Consider processes that identify areas of common ground – but allow adequate time
- Use “pre-meetings” if needed



Manage Public Engagement Meetings Transparently



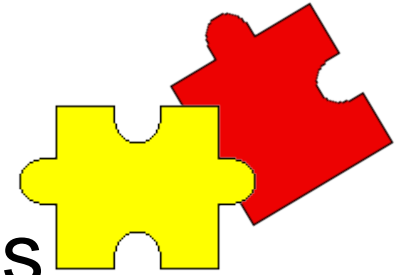
- Describe meeting goals, process, documentation, and what happens next
- Establish meeting ground rules (or “courtesy guidelines”)
- Clarify how questions and/or comments will be handled – and comments documented
- Allow “none of the above” responses
- Show respect, impartiality & good listening

Responding to Negative, Challenging or Emotionally Presented Comments



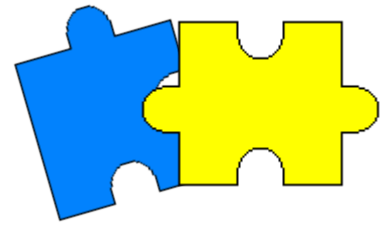
- Remain calm and actively listen; respond to the substance of the comment rather than to its tone
- Intervene if personal verbal attacks are made (refer back to guidelines)
- People who don't feel heard tend to speak loudest (if needed, they can share extra comments w/ staff)
- Maintain control of the microphone
- Know when to move to “back-up” plan

Summary



- Think about your likely participants
- Ensure clarity among sponsors/facilitator
- Inform and include
- Practice transparency
- Fit the process to the participants
- Prepare for “what if...”

Resources



- Webinar link: www.ca-ilg.org/webinarbasics
- Resources and case stories about public engagement strategies to address difficult issues and situations
www.ca-ilg.org/difficult-situations-public-engagement
- Resources to promote civility in public discourse
www.ca-ilg.org/document/promoting-civility-public-discourse
- Strategies to deal with emotional audiences
www.ca-ilg.org/document/dealing-emotional-audiences