Public Meetings and Public Engagement

CSAC New Supervisors Institute
April 11, 2013
ILG Mission

- Promoting good government at the local level
- Practical, impartial and easy-to-use materials
Today’s Purpose:
To develop your capacity to design and implement public engagement processes that are:
- informative
- inclusive
- influential
Basics of Public Engagement (PE) Success

• Clarify your public engagement purposes
• Identify who you want to reach and involve
• Choose the PE approaches that best fit your purposes and participation goals
Common purposes for PE

• Public Information
• Public Consultation
• Public Deliberation
• Sustained Public Problem Solving
Inform

Plan

Public

Consult

Draft Plan

Public
IAP2 Spectrum of Public Engagement

Inform    Consult    Involve    Collaborate    Empower

Increasing Level of Public Impact

www.iap2.org
Public Outreach Myths

• Information alone changes citizen behavior
• “All residents” is a target audience
• Our job is done when we inform people of a public hearing or public meeting
• Testimony representing different viewpoints is a good public conversation
• If they don’t show up, they must be satisfied or don’t care
CA Education Level

High School or less 43%

Some college 26%

College Grad w/out post grad 20%

Post-grad degree 11%

Source: Portrait of California, 2011
Working from Reality

• Only a narrow slice of your county is ready or interested in attending Supervisors meetings
• The language and process of government decision-making is arcane to most people
• Extra effort is required to make the issues accessible to a broad audience
• Traditional public meeting formats can exacerbate divisions; thoughtful preparation can make them more useful for all involved
Stakeholder Education & Trust Building

Deliberation for Decision Making

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING
Planning Questions

- Is it the right timing?
  - Educate/engage well before decision time

- Is the issue framed for public engagement?
  - Values and interests versus policy specifics

- Do you have partners to expand reach?
  - Trusted messengers make connections
More Planning Questions

• How will public input be captured and used?
  – Offer multiple ways to be heard

• Will the process deal with real concerns?
  – The right process can help surface concerns constructively
  – Do not rush to eliminate emotion

• How will you “circle back” with the public?
  – Provide an ongoing information source
Strategic Public Engagement

1. Purpose(s)

2. Participants

3. Processes
Reaching Beyond the Usual Suspects

Advocates and Service Providers
Beyond the Usual Suspects

Adding the untapped community
Reaching Beyond the Usual Suspects

- Strategic Partners
- “Key connectors” to community networks
- Go where people are; flexible formats
- Honor life experience vs. policy knowledge
- Provide basic information about the issue, roles and scope of available actions
- Follow up and stay in touch
Reaching Beyond the Usual Suspects

Group Discussion:

• What has worked well for you?
• What hasn’t worked as well?
Community “Weaving”