

## Preparing an Information Session

### Issues

A first step is to define the issue (s) to be addressed by the public meeting. Is a public meeting appropriate for this issue? Keep in mind that:

- Public meetings are one of the most commonly used methods for contacting and communicating directly with large groups of the population.
- Public meetings offer an opportunity for municipalities to give a formal presentation to a large and wide cross-section of the population.
- The large number of residents and formal setting limits interaction with municipal staff and constrains participation.

### Audience

#### Select a target audience

Possible audiences to consider include:

- All members of the public
- Residents in a specific geographic area affected by a particular proposal
- Special interest groups affected by a particular proposal
- Groups or communities traditionally underserved by planning

Consider preparing a list of communities or organizations to be invited:

## Venue

With the audience in mind, identify possible venues for a Public Meeting.

- In selecting a meeting place, have you considered the following factors:
- Familiarity of the venue to the public
- The proximity of the venue to public transport
- The accessibility of the venue to women and men with different mobility needs
- Proximity of the venue to a proposed project
- Size of the venue in comparison to expected size of audience
- The feasibility of childcare provision on site

Consider preparing a shortlist of possible venues:

## Timing

### Select a meeting date and time

Factors to consider in selecting a date and time:

- Sufficient time to notify the public
- Sufficient time to provide staff with orientation and/or training
- Sufficient flexibility to allow for participation by the desired audience
- Select a time of day and date that is convenient for the constituencies you want to reach, i.e. mothers and the elders might want a day meeting

Possible Dates and Times:

## Establish the overall time frame

In preparing a work plan, keep in mind the following steps. Consider providing an estimate of days or weeks next to each step:

- Initial preparatory work
- Time required to advertise
- Additional staff training time
- Meeting set-up
- Follow-up time

Time frame and deadlines:

## Staff and Resource People

### Ensure adequate staff representation at the public meeting

When selecting staff, consider the following factors:

- At least one or two staff must have the time to devote to preparing for, participating in, and following-up on the Public Meeting
- Staff should be comfortable presenting and responding to the public
- Staff should be familiar with the issues affecting residents
- Ensure staff are both male and female
- Staff should be experienced in working with a wide range of communities
- Does the staff speak any of the languages your audience might?
- Part-time staff or a consultant may be required to supplement staff time

### Provide staff with basic training

At a minimum, training can involve:

- Introduction to the key issues being addressed
- Description of the affected community and key stakeholders
- Role-playing with questions likely to be asked by the public

Consider preparing a checklist of questions likely to be asked by members of the public during the planned Public Meeting:

## Contents

### Prepare information for the meeting

Keep in mind that information should identify the following:

- Purpose of the project/proposal
- Main issues related to the project/proposal
- The information should be disaggregated by gender, race, age, income, status, etc. to show how the situation affects women and men differently
- Members of the study/project team
- Ensure equal numbers of women and men
- Ensure that your consultation process is inclusive and reaches out to all
- Relevant evaluation criteria being used by the municipality
- Proposed steps in the process of public participation
- The public's role in the process
- Alternative options being considered

Consider the format or combination of formats that will be used to present information at the Public Meeting:

- Formal oral presentation
- Audio-visual accompaniment
- Summary report
- One-page bulletins
- Posters/visual displays
- Other

Consider any additional information to be provided prior to the meeting:

- Distributing an information kit to residents
- Should the information material be in other languages?
- Ensuring media coverage of the issue prior to the meeting, including women's and ethnic media
- Disseminating an information publication.

## Advertising

Keep in mind that notices are short and generally outline the following points:

- The issue to be discussed at the Public Meeting
- Why the issue is important to women and men and how it impacts them differently
- Why public input is needed
- Time and dates of the Public Meeting
- A meeting agenda

Consider which combination of media will be most appropriate for reaching the target audience:

- Local newspapers
- Community newsletters
- Radio, including community radio
- Television
- Municipal / Department newsletters
- Other

## Run the Public Meeting

Keep in mind the following considerations when running your public meeting:

- Asking members of the public to sign their names and provide contact information
- Seating arrangements of staff and members of the public
- Length and content of a formal presentation
- Opportunities for public feedback, including a question period
- Ensure that both women and men get to speak
- Clearly defining the role of staff and project representatives
- Providing additional information kits
- Asking participants to complete a questionnaire. Make sure the questionnaire requests information on gender, race, ethnicity, age, income range, etc, so you have disaggregated data and can take different needs into account.

## Follow-up Steps

Consider actions to be taken once the Public Meeting has ended:

- Hold a de-briefing session with staff
- Write up the proceedings of the meeting, including public feedback and disaggregate the comments of the public
- by gender, race, ethnicity, age, ability, etc.
- Ensure completed questionnaires are received from the public
- Provide a summary report to staff and/or council and present the feedback based on the disaggregated data
- Prepare a public advertisement summarizing the meeting
- Consider the need for a second public meeting
- Consider the possibility of making use of a different tool or combination of tools

## Prepare an Event Budget

Consider the following costs:

- Advertisement
- Information and presentation production costs
- Translation
- Interpretation for the hearing impaired
- Staff training costs
- Additional staff or consultant(s)
- Facilities: room rental, refreshments, audio visual equipment
- Follow-up documentation and advertising
- Other costs

List expected costs:

## Identify Funding

Consider a range of mechanisms for funding these costs:

- Departmental funding
- Municipal funding outside department
- In-kind contributions (volunteer time, facility space)
- Sponsorship/cash donations
- Funding from senior levels of government
- International sources of funding
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_