

Description of Consultation Methods		
Methods for Gathering Input and Feedback		
INTERVIEWS: Pre-selected individuals are asked a series of questions to gather information on a specific topic – such as a project or policy – by a trained interviewer.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are good way to obtain both factual and impressionistic information; - can help in building understanding of issues; - can be helpful in dealing with complex issues; - are usually done on a one-to-one basis; - can quickly collect in-depth data; and - can be used in the preparation phase for consultations. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - do not build common ground because participants are usually only interviewed individually and there is no exchange of views with other stakeholders; - are time-consuming; - need a skilled interviewer; - introduce bias of the interviewer.
TOLL-FREE LINES / HOT LINES: A designated phone number to collect comments, or opinions. This method can also be used for voting.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are impersonal, so people can make input without fear; - can be time-efficient; and - are useful for long periods of time and can change roles as issues develop. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - require expertise to ensure responses are accurate; and - need monitoring and attention for language and messages that are not constructive.
QUESTIONNAIRES / SURVEYS: A process for collecting information and opinions (and sometimes advice) where a list of questions requires the recipient to provide responses, through rankings, multiple choice, or open-ended questions.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are especially useful for a large segment of the public; - include the participant who wish to remain anonymous; - can be tailored to reflect local nature of issues; - can be done through mail, on-line, or by telephone; and - provide data. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be difficult to analyze statistically; - need statistical advice to ensure validity of the survey tool; - require expertise to develop valid questions; - can have a low return rate without adequate promotion; and - does not necessarily allow for interaction/ feedback between participants.
OPEN HOUSES/ PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRES/ PUBLIC MEETINGS: A planned event that allows stakeholders and the public to meet with staff/ organizers to review, discuss and/or debate one or several issues of concern and interest.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - give the public the chance to speak on issues of interest to them; - provides an opportunity to explain and give information in-person; - can allow informed discussion and hearing the views of the public; - are more effective in small communities; and - can focus on concerns that are not necessarily issues-related. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can invite off-track issues being raised; and - can risk low attendance if not supported by a plan to advertise and invite specific groups/ participants to attend.

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CONFERENCES / WORKSHOPS: A (usually) large-scale meeting taking place over one or more days with key issues or themes to be discussed through sub-topics.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide a useful forum for small group discussions, presentations, questions and answer sessions and discussion and reporting back; - are seen as the most open forum; - exposes participants to others' views; - provide access to a wide range of participants; and - help to build consensus. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be costly; - can be dominated by a vocal minority; and - need good facilitators.
BILATERAL MEETINGS: Generally composed of one-on-one meetings between government to representatives. They provide an opportunity to identify and define issues and increase the knowledge base for the process.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can allow greater in-depth understanding of specific stakeholder issues; and - can be an opportunity to educate stakeholders on mandate and direction of department. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be limited by a focus on group's agenda; - do not bring together multiple stakeholders to discuss issues and learn; - might be seen as not being transparent; and - can appear to not be transparent or fair.
FOCUS GROUPS: Structured process for collecting information where pre-selected participants provide reaction to specific policies projects or issues. This process tends to be issue focused.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can explore questions of particular interest; - can allow participants to hear others' ideas and test their thinking against the reaction of other participants; - can allow more detailed responses to be produced; - provide an opportunity to determine the range of views on a specific issue proposed changes; - can be very useful for conducting background research prior to consultation and/or for testing clarity of options at the end of the consultation; and - can be relatively inexpensive. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be subject to groups wandering off topic unless clear questions articulated; - depend on careful background research and preparation; - cannot be used to generalize from findings of small focus group – views are not representative of general public; and - are usually mediated by an outside facilitator.

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ADVISORY BOARDS / COMMITTEES: Members participate in ongoing discussions and/or discussions for a defined purpose.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are useful when ongoing feedback or technical expertise are essential to decision-making processes; - can enhance the understanding of nature and impact of problem is crucial to policy, program or service development; - are good for relationship-building; and - are easier to schedule than public/ large meetings. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be highly structured, requiring effort in planning, participating in and managing of process details; - can be taken over by vocal minority; - can be criticized for under-representative; - might give the impression that advisors are decision-makers; and - need clear direction on the expectations for them, their mandate and their role in decision-making processes.
COMMENT FORMS / WORKBOOKS: A publication produced in print or electronic form or both that provides contextual information and invites stakeholders to suggest solutions to a set of problems or challenges.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are useful for expressing the departments mandate, commitment and goals; - are a good way to state a problem or challenge, particularly if different aspects of the issue require careful consideration or specific knowledge; - allow stakeholders to think about issues and respond to directed questions/statements. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need up-to-date distribution list for mail-outs.

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Methods for Bringing People Together		
CONSENSUS CONFERENCES: Two panels are set up: one expert panel and one lay-panel, composed of concerned citizens. The demographically representative lay-panel debates an issue and publishes a report that outlines its expectations, concerns, and recommendations. The lay-panel prepares in advance by reading information and developing key questions. The expert panel makes presentations and answers questions. The conference is open to the public.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open up dialogue between the public, experts, politicians, and government; - can be used for local or national issues, either technical or scientific in nature; - provide citizens with the opportunity to write a document with recommendations; and - can become a media event. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be expensive and time-consuming to set-up panels; - require a lot of preparation by member of both panels; and - can become a media event.
ROUNDTABLES: Industry representative, government agencies and non-government organizations meet to discuss specific issues in which they have a common interest.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allow experts to discuss issues and develop strategies; - can provide the opportunity for an in-depth debate on specific issues; - expose people to diverse opinions; and - give experts and industry an opportunity to work with government representatives. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - might favour recommendations from special interest groups due to lack of general public involvement; and - might be criticized for under-representativeness
TASK FORCES: A group of experts or representative stakeholders study a specific issue. The task force prepares a report with recommendations for action.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide experts the opportunity to lead the discussion; - are useful when visible and public third-party advice is necessary; and - are suited to controversial issues with broad social implications. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - place heavy demands on administration and are time-consuming; - can be seen as biased towards special interest groups; and - can result in a mismatch between recommendations and demands and therefore recommendations made are not implemented.

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ELECTRONIC MEETINGS: A computer network using group decision support software is used to facilitate face-to-face meetings for consensus-building, problem-solving, strategic planning, conflict management, and priority setting.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allow comments to be provided anonymously thereby improving equal participation; - allow greater focus on issues rather than personalities - do not require ideas to be transcribed – input is recorded during the process; - can produce ideas simultaneously, from many different participants at once; - can produce ideas in more than one language simultaneously; are highly structured and are therefore more likely to stay on track; and - can be used in the preparation phase for consultations. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rely on facilitators who are familiar with the software; - require a facilitator who can balance talk vs. technology overload; - need ground rules for participation and interaction; and - require typing skills, or assistants need to be provided to help enter input.
CITIZEN JURIES: A small, randomly-selected group of a dozen or so representatives of the community listen to experts present evidence and then deliberate over a period of time. The group recommends actions to an authority, which takes the final decision.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are good for involving citizens in significant decisions; - can be useful for complex or highly-technical issues; and - can be a valuable example for connecting commitment and obtaining informed opinions. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are not necessarily representative of the community as a whole, due to small numbers; and - are costly and therefore issues should be chosen carefully
CITIZEN PANELS: A large group (hundreds) of demographically representative people responds to proposals by government. The group can be randomly selected or selected based on knowledge and interest.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be used over a long period of time as a source for quantitative and qualitative information; and - do not have to meet face-to-face. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be expensive to set-up if not used regularly; - might not allow for mutual trust, common language and confidence to be developed among members.
STUDY CIRCLES: A small group (5-20) of selected participants who meet regularly to address issues, usually with a trained facilitator and basic ground rules for discussion.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allow responsibility and control of discussion by participants to increase over time; - are simple and easy to manage; and - are inexpensive; - rely on access to local resources and ideas. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are not necessarily representative of the community as a whole, due to small numbers.

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SEARCH CONFERENCES: Consisting of a large group of invited individuals (60 to 70) who have diverse perspectives. The purpose is to create a desired future by sharing information, and develop mutual understanding. Conferences consist of working sessions with a wide range of parties such as government, industry and users.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are a good process to use at a community level in addressing local issues; - are helpful in building common understanding; and - are most useful when there is limited time and participants do not need any prior training. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are challenging to organize to ensure representation; - might lead to additional requests for research.
THINK TANKS: Brings together large or small groups of individuals with knowledge and expertise to develop solutions to current issues and problems. The process can take one to three days.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide an opportunity to think creatively; - are most useful when issues are complex; and - are useful if recommendations from a third-party are needed. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - depend on the selection of participants; - cannot rely on expert-only opinion to represent the broader public's views; and - can be influenced by expert biases that might not be supported by the general public.
CHARETTES: A problem solving workshop that brings together all interest groups, however diverse their opinions.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allow for diverse groups to come together to solve issues; - are useful when agreement needs to be reached in a short time; and - allow participants to gain a better understanding of different and opposing positions. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - might develop into a longer process than initially planned; - depend on consensus and it might be hard to get all participants to commit to resolve differences and determine appropriate plan that is acceptable to all; and - can force the authority to accept the results or lose credibility.

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DELIBERATIVE POLLING AND DIALOGUES: Aspects of polling, conferences, and roundtables are combined. A randomly selected and demographically representative group of people (40-100) completes a questionnaire at the beginning of the process. Participants are then provided with documents on various scenarios, including arguments for and against each scenario. Participants debate the pros and cons. Finally, participants complete a second questionnaire to assess any changes from the initial perceptions and why those changes occurred.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allow issue to be quite specific; allow formal and informal interaction; - can include experts who serve as a resource; - provide an opportunity for participants to become informed on issues; - requires participants to say “why” they support a particular viewpoint; and - can track changes in participants’ positions, if any. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be expensive and time-consuming to plan, implement and produce final reports; - are relatively new techniques and require facilitators who are experienced; and - rely on representative samples of the population, which can complicate planning for travel and accommodation.
THE DELPHI PROCESS: A group is selected that represents different points of view on an issue. Participants give comments and discuss the issues. After discussion, group members provide responses to the issues and viewpoints anonymously. Discussion and sharing continue until the group reaches consensus or stable disagreement.	Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - encourages understanding of different viewpoints and compromise; - focuses on finding mutually-agreed upon solutions. 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be time-consuming; - might result in participants changing their thinking and adopting the popular view; and - is not appropriate for groups not interested in compromise or consensus.

Description of Consultation Methods	
On-Line Consultations	
<p>E-mail Lists –A group of participants (subscribers) communicate with each other through a single e-mail address. Original e-mail sent to the main address as well as all the replies are distributed across all participants.</p>	<p>Bulletin Board – A Web-based application where users can post messages to a website. This is a relatively simple tool that allows participants to post responses to each other’s messages but doesn’t provide true discussion threads.</p>
<p>Web-Forum – Online applications such as this combine the basics of web-based discussions with aspects of live chat. This type of online collaboration tool includes real time white boarding, chat, file sharing with asynchronous discussion area.</p>	<p>Web-based discussion – Similar to a bulletin board, it allows participants to post messages and respond to messages. In addition, it includes basic document sharing, discussion threading and password protection.</p>
<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allow specific questions and issues to be discussed; - can allow those less publicly vocal to provide input; - provide easy and cost-efficient access to background information and documents; and - allow opinions to be expressed without issues of location. 	<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - depend on internet access and computer literacy; - require communication skills for the internet - need ground rules for participation and interaction; - require expertise / training to develop and manage, and facilitate or moderate, if required.

Table 2.1 Methods of Consultation

Descriptions of these methods of consultation can be found in Tool #2.

Type of public involvement	Methods of Consultation	Medium
“Conventional” consultations	interviews	in person
	toll-free lines / hotlines	telephone
	questionnaires / surveys	hard copy, on-line
	open houses / public information centres / public meetings	in person, video link
	conferences / workshops	in person, video link, on-line (synchronous and asynchronous)
	bilateral meetings	in person, teleconference
	focus groups	in person
	advisory boards / committees	in person
	comment forms / workbooks	hard copy, on-line
Citizen engagement	consensus conferences	in person
	roundtables	in person, video link
	task forces	in person, video link
	electronic meetings (group decision support software)	in person, video link
	citizen juries	in person
	citizen panels	in person
	study circles	in person
	search conferences	in person
	think tanks	in person
	charettes	in person
	deliberative polling and dialogues	in person
	the Delphi process	in person

SAMPLE PARTICIPANTS' CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CONSULTATIONS

Individual and stakeholder rights to participate in consultations are accompanied by responsibilities. Parties that participate in consultation processes should do so in good faith and with the public interest, as well as their own interest, in mind. Participants also have a responsibility to engage in effective, balanced and civil communication. All representatives have a responsibility to ensure that they are accountable to their constituents, that the government gets the information it needs to make a well-informed and balanced decisions, and that consultation processes operate as efficiently as possible.

Participants in consultation processes should:

1. Maximize the exchange of information among parties and minimize misunderstandings, by:
 - speaking clearly, listening carefully and asking for clarification if a point is not understood;
 - sharing information related to the issues at hand;
 - stating concerns about other participants, the issues or the process openly and directly;
 - clearly explaining what is important to them, what their interests are and why; and
 - stating their perspective as concisely and briefly as possible.
2. Ensure that all participants have the opportunity to speak and all perspectives and interests are taken into account, by:
 - seeking the participation of all participants; and
 - providing opportunities for affected parties to be heard before making a decision.
3. Maintain a respectful atmosphere, by:
 - respecting each others' values and interests;
 - separating issues from people;
 - avoiding accusatory or critical language, rude behaviour, and stereotyping;
 - listening to what others have to say without interrupting;
 - beginning meetings on time; and
 - seeking a better understanding of other perspectives with an open mind.
4. Ensure accountability to constituencies, if applicable, by:
 - making every effort to attend all important consultation meetings, or sending an alternate as agreed upon by participants;
 - establishing clear lines of accountability with those they represent, and with other representatives;
 - acting in accordance with the authority granted by constituents and ensuring that other representatives understand this authority;
 - sharing pertinent information with their constituencies regularly and seeking support for areas of agreement; and

SAMPLE EVALUATION TABLE

This evaluation table can be used to outline the objectives, success indicators, and evaluation throughout or at the end of the consultation process. This sample provides examples of how this template can be used.

Objective	Success Indicator	Possible Evaluation Technique(s)
Identify changes needed to update an act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One or two new and innovative ideas developed and explored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation
Increase knowledge of the regulatory process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75% of participants will be able to describe the regulatory process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys/Questionnaires/Interviews
Increase the diversity of participants who are involved in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New organizations representing particular areas/issues will be represented Representation from minority language communities will be doubled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants sign-in at sessions
Increase knowledge of ecological issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% of participants will be able to describe pre-determined ecological issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys/Questionnaires/Interviews
Increase understanding of issues among participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15% of participants indicate new appreciation for others' concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-polling and post-polling exercises conducted
Hold procedurally fair meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of participants felt meetings were well-managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys/Questionnaires/Interviews
Encourage more feedback online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of responses online doubled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare past online consultations on same subject Specific promotion of online consultations done through website, number of letters, etc.

- acting quickly to raise and resolve any concerns regarding the accountability of the process or any of the representatives to protect the integrity and trust of the group.
5. When negotiating in a consultation process, facilitate agreements across the full spectrum of interests, by:
- negotiating in good faith, building as much agreement as possible;
 - avoiding participation in activities that might undermine the consultation process;
 - focusing on underlying interests or objectives rather than positions and seek to understand the interests of others;
 - acknowledging agreement on mutual interests, values and principles, as a basis for fostering positive relationships;
 - recognizing the legitimacy of all interests;
 - treating issues as problems to be solved not as personal or sectoral conflicts;
 - allowing participants the freedom to be creative, brainstorm, and test ideas without prejudice to future discussions; and
 - positively supporting consensus agreements once they have been reached.
6. Engaging in appropriate communications activities and media involvement, by:
- ensuring that descriptions of the process and the views of other representatives are accurate and acceptable to all representatives before communicating them to the general public or the media; and
 - ensuring that contact with the media is respectful of others.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Preparation

- Was the need for consultation confirmed?
- Was a planning team established and roles and responsibilities assigned?
- Were objectives of the consultation and expected outcomes identified?
- Was a timeline for the consultation process developed?
- Were the potential benefits and disadvantages of the consultation identified using a context scan?
- Were anticipated costs, resources and required skills identified?
- Were the roles for communications and the media identified?
- Were criteria for monitoring and evaluation established and related to the objectives?

Design

- Were consultations method(s) identified for various circumstances and participants?
- Were participants given enough time to prepare input for consultations?
- Were plans developed for each consultation activity?

Implementation

- Were expectations shared with and among participants?
- Were conflicts anticipated and managed?
- Who facilitated? Was the facilitation successful?
- Were participants prepared to participate in activities? Was enough information provided? Was the information understandable?
- Was monitoring incorporated in the consultation process? Were modifications necessary (in methods, timetable, resources or participation) to advance the consultation objectives?

Synthesis & Reporting

- Was feedback sought on the process and progress of the consultation?
- Were participants kept up-to-date on the process?
- Was it determined in advance how to report back, when and to whom?

Evaluation

- Was there ongoing documentation and reporting throughout the consultation process?
- Was the evaluation based on the performance indicators established earlier in the process?
- How was the feedback used in the decision-making process?
- Can best practices and lessons learned be shared with others?
- Is follow-up required for next steps in the relationship with participants and stakeholders?