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PART II: WTD PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOL KIT

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INTRODUCTION

The *Public Involvement Tool Kit* defines the tools necessary to effectively design and implement public involvement for King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) projects and programs. While the guidelines explained the theory, regulations and strategy that drive public involvement, this tool kit provides the building blocks of a successful public involvement effort.

The tools in this kit will enable community relations planners to implement public involvement activities that are strategic, cost effective and provide a meaningful outcome that supports the goals of the project.

This kit breaks public involvement activities and tools into the following groups:

1. Printed Materials
2. Signs
3. Online Communications
4. Public Information Distribution
5. Media
6. Advertisements
7. Public Meetings
8. Contact Information and Hotlines
9. Outreach to Stakeholder, General Public and Individuals
10. Evaluation Tools

Each group includes an introduction that describes the group and how it supports public involvement programs. The introduction also describes the types of additional guidance and implementation suggestions that can be found in the two-volume *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

Within each group, the specific tool descriptions include a definition of the tool, a discussion of when and why a particular tool should be used, how it might contribute to the project outcome, and what resources are required. To facilitate comparison and evaluation between tools, the reader will find in each tool description:

- Title
- Definition
- How the Tool Supports the Project
- When to Use
- When Not to Use
- Resources
    - Time
    - Cost
    - Staff

The tools described in this kit are proven and effective. When used appropriately, they can enable meaningful communication between the County's project teams and the public they serve; and they ultimately result in projects that are accepted and understood by the community. However, selecting tools from this kit should come at the end of development of a deliberate and well-planned public involvement strategy.

Performing a careful needs assessment and developing a public involvement plan (Section 3) will answer the key questions that guide the selection of proper public involvement tools: What are the project goals? Who are the key stakeholders? Do the stakeholders have special needs (e.g., use English as a second language and require translation services)? What is the purpose of the outreach effort – to solicit public feedback or simply educate and inform? Which laws and regulations are influencing the project? Choosing the right tools for a project should come as a result of answering those questions, not vice versa. The tools presented in this kit are only as powerful as the planning and strategy that comes before them.

Printed Materials

Printed materials provide details about programs and projects that are planned or underway. It is essential that the information presented in printed materials is clear, concise and free of jargon, acronyms and overly technical language.

Printed materials can help people understand the problem or opportunity being addressed, provide them with needed context, and allow them to understand the who, what, where, when, why, and how of a program or project. It is important to explain the County's role, the need for the project, and how public input affects the project's decisions. Printed materials are a good way to inform the stakeholders or affected public of public involvement opportunities throughout a program or project.

Most of the printed materials in this group consist of one-way communications – from the County to stakeholders – and should never be the only tool used for a public involvement program. This is particularly true for projects that require two-way communications to reassure stakeholders that the County is truly listening to their concerns. Therefore, be sure to include a contact person and to consider including a postage-paid comment form along with other printed materials to encourage two-way communication. Also, think about combining printed materials with more interactive tools, like public meetings, surveys or websites.

As part of a complete public involvement effort, printed materials perform the following functions

- Prepare the public for participation
- Inform them of potential impacts and benefits of a project
- Keep them aware of and tuned into project progress.

Printed materials should always provide a contact name phone number, mailing address and e-mail and Web site addresses. They should follow the King County style guide. Printed materials should display the King County logo in a prominent position and in accordance with the King County logo guidelines.

All printed materials must contain the legally required Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) statement. This statement provides information and contact numbers regarding special accommodations at public meetings and obtaining printed materials in accessible formats. Please refer to King County Office of Civil Rights, *Checklist for Accessible Printed Materials,* for the appropriate statements and font sizes. The checklist can be found in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide* along with a variety of resources and guidelines related to printed materials. These resources include example ADA statements, templates for printed materials, logo guidelines, and resources for using plain language. In addition, existing display boards and other materials and contacts for obtaining them are provided.

The tools contained in this section are:

- Key Messages
- Fact Sheets

- Newsletters
- Fliers
- Postcards
- Construction Notices and Updates
- Brochures
- Issue Papers/Technical Memos/Technical Reports
- Project Displays
- Project Posters
- Comment Forms
- Newspaper Inserts
- Bill Stuffers

Definition

Key messages are short statements that clearly communicate the goals of an organization or a specific project or program. They are the foundation for all communications with the public. WTD's primary key message is:

> **“Wastewater treatment protects public health and the environment.”**

Project messages should support and reinforce WTD’s primary key message. Key messages are short, written in non-technical language, avoid insider jargon, and are easy to use and understand.

How Key Messages Support the Project

Key messages support consistent, clear communications throughout the course of a project and among all members of a project team. They are particularly useful when difficult questions are asked, or as “sound bites” with the media. They build a better understanding of WTD’s mission and demonstrate the connection between this mission and individual WTD projects and programs. When key messages are integrated across many projects and programs, they reinforce the important ideas with the public and help place a project or program into a bigger context.

When to Use

Key messages should be incorporated into all public and stakeholder communications. They should be agreed upon and used by the entire project team, not just the community relations planner.

When Not to Use

There is never a bad time to use key messages, as long as they are short and concise.

Resources

Time: Project-specific key messages should be developed in the initial stages of the project.

Cost: Zero.

Staff: Community relations planners can develop key messages during the early stages of a project, as part of the public involvement plan preparation.

Definition

Fact sheets are static pieces that provide topical information such as project schedule, alternatives under consideration, terminology definitions and project description. Fact sheets are used to provide specific, detailed information to stakeholders and affected public to help them develop a knowledge base so they can fully participate in a decision-making process. They are used at open houses and are also helpful for the media.

How Fact Sheets Support the Project

Fact sheets can be used as a "leave behind" at community meetings, open houses or at community centers and libraries for the public to pick up and read at their leisure. They give project or program managers the opportunity to present technical information in layman's terms for ease of understanding. They can be used to provide general information about a project in the absence of staff. Fact sheets should have a similar look and feel, be dated, and identify the version number, if updates have been made.

When to Use

Fact sheets are useful for a complex or controversial project or program. They can be used when several stakeholders at a public meeting are asking for specific information. They can also be used to break down project or program information into manageable "bites" as well as offer an in-depth look at a subject mentioned only briefly in a flier or newsletter. Fact sheets should provide staff, project or program contact information; web site address, if appropriate; and a description of how a reader can get more information or ask questions. Fact sheets are useful when distributed widely within the program or project area. Fact sheets address specific issues, like the Brightwater siting process, elements of the RWSP or odor control at specific treatment plants.

When Not to Use

Fact sheets should not be used for short-lived projects. They should also not be used when information is changing very rapidly, as that would require constant updating of the fact sheets and might result in the circulation of inaccurate facts.

Resources	**Time:** Writing, layout and printing can be accomplished within two to three weeks. **Cost:** Fact sheets are easily and inexpensively reproduced, if designed as a black and white piece. Reprinting costs may go up if color (in a template design) is used. **Staff:** Fact sheets translate technical information into layman's language, and require both technical and community relations staff time for content development.

Definition

Newsletters are informative pieces used to communicate information and key messages about a project on a regular basis to interested parties. Newsletters can support different phases of a project (predesign, design, construction) and different aspects of programs. Newsletters are published on a regular, ongoing basis at pre-determined intervals (e.g., quarterly). The intervals are determined by project or program needs. Newsletters should contain tear-out comment cards to enable readers to provide comment on the newsletter's subject matter or decisions being made. Newsletters typically include pictures or simple graphics and contain multiple stories or articles about the project or program.

How Newsletters Support the Project

When a project or program is long-lived, but with changing information, a newsletter is a useful tool to keep stakeholders and the public informed and up-to-date. Newsletters provide context for decisions and can help the audience understand the need for a program or the problem a project addresses. Newsletters are also a good tool to keep a project alive in the eyes of the community while work, like design or permitting, is progressing away from public view. The tear-out comment card included in a newsletter helps project staff integrate community or stakeholder responses into future planning efforts.

When to Use

Newsletters are good to use when a project or program has changing information on a regular basis. Newsletters can be used to provide general overview information to a broad audience. They are particularly useful for programs that last several years and follow a defined process and schedule.

When Not to Use

Newsletters are not suggested if information is changing rapidly. It also is not a suggested tool when communicating with small audiences because of the production time required. Before committing to a regular newsletter, determine if there will be new or updated information to justify the frequency of the publication.

Resources

Time: It typically takes four to six weeks to write copy, develop or select graphics and accomplish layout for a newsletter. Extra time is usually required to design the inaugural issue, which can then serve as a template for subsequent issues.

Cost: Newsletters can be expensive, as they tend to require the assistance of a trained graphic designer to achieve a consistent look and create high-level of graphics and illustrations. In addition, newsletters usually require professional printing, rather than copying.

Staff: Staff time is required to research and draft text, supervise designers and arrange for printing and mailing.

Definition

A flier is a printed piece used to communicate information to affected stakeholders and members of the public about a single project. Fliers generally contain a brief discussion of timely information. They must always include the project's key messages. The development of a flier is driven by events, rather than scheduled on a regular basis. Fliers are typically black and white, contain simple graphics or pictures, and are short (1-2 pages) and easily reproduced.

How Fliers Support the Project

Fliers are a relatively inexpensive, effective way to get information to the public. They can be produced on an as-needed basis, and can communicate information about impending decision points, upcoming events or changing timelines.

When to Use

A flier should be used whenever information on a project has changed significantly. They are particularly useful for informing the public about a project or activity that directly affects them (e.g., construction, road closure, facility testing). Used in combination with public meetings, fliers form the foundation for informing the public about projects.

When Not to Use

Fliers are not suggested to support programs or long-term planning processes. Fliers should not be produced and distributed unless a change has occurred, there is new information to share or an event has been scheduled.

Resources

Time: Fliers can be developed and distributed within a one-week period.

Cost: As fliers are generally produced in black and white and photocopied, they are inexpensive. Delivery costs (mailing or door-to-door delivery) depend on the size of the distribution area.

Staff: Staff time is required to distill complex project information into clear, concise, non-technical language for the flier

Definition

A postcard is a two-sided, single page information piece that is typically smaller than an 8 ½ x 11" piece of paper. Postcards are mailed to project or program mailing lists or an entire carrier route. A postcard uses heavy, durable paper stock. Postcards are intended to convey single ideas, messages, reminders or event information to the recipient. Postcards are generally designed to call attention to themselves, both by graphical design and by shape and size.

How Postcards Support the Project

A postcard can be a companion piece to newsletters, posters or fliers. They should be designed to be very eye-catching and convey a piece of information to the public in a very quick, easy-to-read format.

When to Use

Use a postcard when the target audience needs to be reminded about a date, when a single detail or event has occurred or as an announcement of upcoming events or significant project or program milestones.

When Not to Use

Do not use postcards to convey complicated information, multiple messages or static information.

Resources

Time: Postcards can be designed and distributed in as little as two weeks, or may take longer if a more complicated, professionally-designed look is required.

Cost: Postcards are less expensive to mail than standard letters. Be sure and check with the post office for current size limitations to qualify a piece for postcard rates. Production of postcards can be inexpensive, if done in-house and without color. However, incorporating color into the design or using more expensive paper stock may add to the price.

Staff: As with any printed piece, staff time is required to develop the text and select graphics. Time commitment should not be great, as a postcard should not contain large amounts of text or information.

Definition

Construction notices and updates are used to disseminate specific project information to a limited, localized audience. They have a very short shelf life, and are limited in text (to-the-point information only). They must include the key messages about the project in order to provide project context and continuity.

How Construction Notices and Updates Support the Project

These notices and updates serve to keep those who are impacted by construction informed about changing conditions. They are produced with a very short lead time and are distributed to the impacted residents or businesses through door-to-door delivery or by mail.

When to Use

A construction notice can be used when a project condition will impact community members (i.e., a temporary road closure). They are designed to provide short pieces of critical or time-sensitive information.

When Not to Use

Do not use a construction notice to educate community members about an upcoming project, to gain feedback on a decision or to announce an impact that would be specific to only one household or business.

Resources

Time: Construction updates can be developed and copied in two days.

Cost: Construction updates are produced in black and white and easily reproduced. The most costly aspect of a construction update will be the distribution cost (door-to-door delivery or mail).

Staff: Staff time is necessary to develop the content of the update (or to provide information to consultants).

Definition

A brochure is a long-lived, professionally designed, visually appealing information piece. Brochures offer descriptions and definitions of a program or of an entire division. Brochures are usually produced in color and are often printed in large quantities (e.g. thousands) on heavier and/or glossy paper stock. The target audience for brochures is generally very broad and the shelf life of a brochure is typically 12 months or more. Brochures are typically distributed at walk-in locations around the County such as courthouses and service counters as well as used as handouts at public meetings or events. They are not usually mailed.

How Brochures Support the Project

A brochure offers a clear description and graphical representation of aspects of a program or division and increases the public's understanding of its goals, elements and/or accomplishments. A brochure is a useful tool to build support for or to help communicate the purpose or need for a program. Brochures must be carefully thought out, appealing, attractive and inviting to the reader, without appearing exceptionally expensive or wasteful.

When to Use

Use a brochure to support a long-lived program and as an essential marketing piece for building public support or awareness. Use a brochure to provide sources of more information. It should be used when the information contained has a life expectancy of at least a year or two.

When Not to Use

Do not use a brochure to present information that is subject to change or alteration in a short time-span. Do not use a brochure for a very limited target area.

Resources

Time: Brochures require a lot of lead-time for preparation of text and graphics. Time must be included for copy development, graphic design time and approval. Printing of brochures generally requires advance reservation with a printer, and can take as long as a month from start to finish.

Cost: Brochures are expensive to produce, both in terms of design and printing.

Staff: Brochures require a fair amount of staff time for researching and writing text, deciding on graphics and "look and feel" of the brochure, working with the graphic designer to achieve the desired product and navigating an extensive review cycle. When considering a brochure, it is imperative that a dedicated staff person be assigned to be the "shepherd" of the piece.

Definition

These are papers written about a project or specific aspect of a project that contain relatively detailed technical information. The technical staff assigned to the project generally prepares them. Issue papers are produced as a result of a request for more information or in-depth discussion of an issue. A technical report or memo may summarize a study. Scientific issue papers/technical memos/reports may need to have an independent peer review to meet legal requirements. They are often used for stakeholder groups with technical expertise, such as regulatory or resource agencies. While they will contain technical information, they should still be clearly written and acronyms and jargon should be explained. Technical reports and memos are typically driven by either regulatory, policy or project-specific requirements.

How Issue Papers/Technical Memos/Technical Reports Support the Project

Issue papers, technical reports and technical memos are usually the primary source of information that goes into public involvement pieces such as fact sheets, newsletters and fliers. Distilled down to the public information level (deletion of acronyms, jargon and overly technical terms), they will help ensure key messages are accurate and include the appropriate technical background.

When to Use

Use issue papers and technical memos and reports as a resource for stakeholders who have asked for a more detailed description or in-depth discussion of particular aspects of a project. Technical memos and reports, as well as issue papers, must be made available in a public repository for all projects and are an essential part of the public record. They are good to use with advisory groups that are involved at a deeper level in a project or program over a period of time.

When Not to Use

These should not be used as general handouts at public meetings or other public events. They are not appropriate as stand-alone public information pieces, as they are not written at the appropriate level for casual public consumption.

Resources

Time: Technical memos and reports require a significant time investment, but are generally among the required elements of a project. Therefore, they often do not require additional public involvement staff preparation time. Issue papers may be prepared by public involvement or technical staff and may require a significant amount of time to work with project staff to fully understand and correctly capture all aspects of the targeted issue.

Cost: These reports and papers are typically black and white and are easily reproduced. Cost may become an issue when multiple copies of multiple reports are requested.

Staff: Staff that understands the technical aspects of the project must prepare these reports. Issue papers may be prepared in conjunction with technical staff and require the writer to have a good command of the technical aspects.

Definition

A project display is a static informational tool. It can be a single display board (often made of foam core) or a set of boards or informational pieces that describe a project, program or plan. Often colorful and heavily dependent on graphics, project displays are useful in helping to communicate technical information to the public. Displays should not be text-heavy. They are generally portable, and can be moved from place to place in order to broaden public exposure to project or program information. A project display may be taken to a shopping center, library, open house or a gathering to present project information to the public in their own familiar surroundings. Displays are most effective when accompanied by a staff person who is available to answer questions and provide more detailed information.

How Displays Support the Project

A display is a good way to get information out to the public in places where they live, shop or congregate. Stakeholders may be more likely to absorb information that is presented this way than at a public meeting. Creatively and functionally designed displays allow people to take in the information at their own speed and within their own learning style. This tool is good to use if the project has a long life span and is used in conjunction with additional tools to get information out into the community. What sets a display apart from a poster is its shelf life and the specificity of its information. The information contained in a display should be general and pertain to a wide audience. The purpose of creating a display is to have a long-lasting informational piece that can be reused in a variety of settings and venues.

When to Use

Use this tool in combination with other one-way informational materials, such as fact sheets, newsletters and websites, to build community awareness and knowledge about plans, project or programs. Consider use of a display on a case-by-case basis at a public hearing or at a meeting with a permitting agency.

When Not to Use

Displays are not recommended if the project, program or plan has a rapid timeline, where the information is changing regularly or the information does not lend itself to graphical representation. Project displays are not advised for projects or plans that are small in scope, budget or staffing resources.

Resources

Time: Displays require forethought and planning to present information in a way that is accessible, attractive and appealing to the general public. Allow several weeks to develop the information and design, perform a review and edit cycle and produce the display pieces.

Cost: Displays can be expensive to produce. Full-color depictions of plan or program elements generally require graphic support for design and production.

Staff: Coordination and scheduling displays at different venues requires staff support to determine appropriate locations and availability of space as well as to pack, transport, set up and tear down and staff the displays.

Definition

Posters are large, printed, visually appealing pieces that contain a limited amount of specific information about a program or project. They are used to communicate basic information about a plan or program or to make announcements about events such as a tour, meeting or open house. The program or project's key messages should be incorporated into the poster. Information on a poster should include contact information, a photo or other graphical elements, division or section involved and website information if available. Posters should be designed to complement the size, budget and targeted audience of a program, plan or project. Posters can range from 8 ½" x 11" black and white meeting notices with minimal graphics to a 2' x 3' full-color, glossy art piece that requires professional design and printing.

How Project Posters Support the Project

Posters can augment other means of disseminating information. They can contribute to the repetition of a message, which is crucial for getting dates or other time-sensitive information to "stick" with the public. Poster can stimulate interest in an event or a program. Hanging posters at regularly frequented gathering places, such as coffee shops, supermarkets, post offices, etc., can help call attention to the specific event, meeting, or idea being promoted. A poster differs from a sign or display in that its shelf life is intentionally limited. Posters are not meant to be reused throughout the duration of a project, but rather used once at a critical juncture to convey specific, timely information. As such, the material used for printing does not need to be as durable as a sign or display.

When to Use

Posters can be used whenever it is important to promote an event or an idea to a large segment of the community. Posters should have clearly defined messages and be specific to the event or the program. They should be used to augment other tools, such as news releases and newsletters, to stimulate participation.

When Not to Use

If a meeting or event is intentionally limited in attendance or is invitation-only, a poster is inappropriate. A full-color, glossy poster would be inappropriate to promote a small project or a project with potential budget controversies.

Resources

Time: Time to produce a poster depends on the complexity of its design, materials used and size. A simple black and white design that can be copied may require only a few days for text development, information confirmation and production. If a meeting or event is being announced, distribution time should be at least two weeks prior to the date on the poster. A more complex, highly designed poster can take four to six weeks to develop, design and print.

Cost: Costs vary, again depending on complexity of design and quantities produced. More complex or artistic posters generally require graphic design expertise for layout and professional printing, which makes the poster a costly undertaking.

Staff: Staff time is required for content development and for gaining permission to post posters as well as for distribution and removal after an event or when the posters are no longer pertinent.

Definition

Comment forms are used as a tool to capture written project or program feedback from stakeholders and the public. They contain spaces for citizens to write comments and provide contact information, if the commenter wishes to do so.

How Comment Forms Support the Project

Comment forms can be helpful in gauging what is and is not acceptable for a project, plan or program, according to the public. They help to define the main issues for affected citizens. Comment forms are generally provided at public meetings and can be included with project or program displays, newsletters or electronically on a website.

They are a way for citizens to let their thoughts be known and for the County to show that they value public input.

When to Use

Comment forms should be used as part of a formal public comment period required by law or regulation (e.g., review of draft environmental impact statements). In this case, they are compiled and addressed in a comment response document. They can also be used on a display or printed materials to collect informal feedback on a project. Comment forms should be used at public meetings and hearings. A citizen may find it easier to write down their comments than to voice them to a staff person. Refer to the Online Communications section of this tool kit for information on online comment forms.

When Not to Use

Do not use comment forms to record complaints or questions that require immediate or direct response by project staff.

Resources

Time: Comment forms can be prepared and duplicated immediately ahead of public events.

Cost: Comment forms are low-cost, typically black and white and are easily copied.

Staff: Staff time must be dedicated to deciding the questions asked and compiling the input received. If many comments are expected, it may be time-effective to use a spreadsheet or database application to track the comment cards and to categorize them.

Definition

An insert is a fact sheet, flier or newsletter inserted within a local newspaper. Inserts provide the same type of information as pieces that are mailed or delivered door-to-door, but they take advantage of the newspapers' distribution network. Inserts are generally provided to the newspaper already printed and in the quantities that match the newspapers' circulation.

How Newspaper Inserts Support the Project

Inserts provide community-wide distribution of information, but are limited to subscribers. The information is presented in the context of the local paper, which makes it more likely to be read and taken seriously.

When to Use

An insert can be a helpful tool when trying to reach a rural or smaller community that depends on its local newspaper for community information. When possible, plan insertion on a day that the paper has few other inserts (e.g., advertisements).

When Not to Use

Inserts are not generally recommended in larger, daily papers, as they are more expensive and do not stand out enough to stimulate reading.

Resources

Time: Inserts must be arranged with the newspaper well ahead of the intended insertion date. Check with the newspaper to find out their timing policy and insertion guidelines.

Cost: Insertions have two costs – the cost of developing and printing the piece and the cost (per piece) for the insertion. While insertion may be less expensive than mailing, cost depends on individual newspaper's pricing plan. Consider comparing the cost of placing a full-page advertisement in the local weekly papers to the cost of an insert.

Staff: In addition to creating and producing the insert, staff time must be dedicated to coordinating the insertion with the newspaper and assuring the piece is delivered to the newspaper by the insertion deadline.

Definition

A bill stuffer is an informational flier included with a monthly or bi-monthly utility bill.

How Bill Stuffers Support the Project

Bill stuffers can reach a targeted audience (i.e., local sewer district customers). Bill stuffers can also be an inexpensive way to distribute information. Because WTD enters into service agreements with local sewer districts, the County does not directly bill customers for sewer service. Instead, local sewer districts bill the customers. Thus, WTD does not do its own bill stuffers. The planner would, instead, have to work with each local sewer agency individually to develop content for its bill stuffer and to arrange for it to be placed.

When to Use

Consider using bill stuffers only when dealing with small utility companies or districts that manage their own billing process. Bill stuffers must be designed (size and thickness) to fit stuffing requirements of the local district. The district or company must be willing to accept bill stuffers. Bill stuffers are not commonly used by WTD. They have been attempted, but were found to be very complicated. Each component agency has a different size bill, different billing dates and a variety of automated bill stuffers. In the past, bill inserts have led to public confusion and County staff have been the recipients of phone calls inquiring about individual billing.

When Not to Use

Do not consider using bill stuffers for critical information, as the customer often doesn't read them. Bill stuffers can be a very time consuming tool to use, as they require a great deal of coordination with the local district or utility.

Resources

Time: Allow as much as three months lead time in order to fit your stuffer into the local districts' bill mailing cycle.

Cost: Bill stuffers are inexpensive, as they require only black and white reproduction.

Staff: Staff time investment can be significant when working out details of coordination with the local district or company.

Signs

Signs are a set of tools that range from a posted notice (e.g., a laminated flier) to a self-supporting structure bearing project information. Like informational materials, they contain key messages and provide one-way communications about a project. Signs can be an effective way of drawing attention to a project, communicating a major message or advertising an upcoming event or meeting.

Signs complement other informational materials such as fliers, newsletters and media tools. They should rarely be used as the sole means of informing affected public about an upcoming project. Instead, they should repeat key messages. If the project is taking place in a highly visible area, such as a park or along a trail or a major road, signs are a good tool to use to educate the public.

A key consideration is determining what type of sign is required. Examples include project-specific signs, facility/building signs, traffic control signs or interpretive (educational) signs. These guidelines do not address the issue of permanent facility or building signs. They also do not address permit-related signage (e.g., shoreline signs), which is the responsibility of right-of-way and permitting staff, or State Environmental Policy Act signage, which is the responsibility of environmental planning staff.

A second consideration is ensuring signs are appropriate for a target an audience. For example, a posted flier or laminated poster would be suitable for pedestrians. Signs that will be viewed by passing motorists and/or bicyclists need to be simpler and contain large lettering.

The length of time the sign will be needed should also be considered. A simple, inexpensive poster or a plastic sign that can be quickly produced and updated may be appropriate for short duration projects or to address localized impacts. A more durable, permanent sign may be suitable to provide general project information and contact information.

A special note about traffic control signs: due to liability considerations, King County requires construction contractors to submit and obtain approval of traffic control plans from the local jurisdiction. Traffic control signs are critical to protecting and maintaining public safety. The contractor is responsible for implementing the traffic control plan, including providing the required signs. The community relations staff does not obtain or place traffic control signs. They may, however, identify the need for supplemental project signage (e.g., directing patrons to businesses during construction) or raise public issues related to traffic to the project team.

King County Department of Transportation (DOT) has a sign shop that can construct and install signs as well as provide suggestions and advice on appropriate signage for specific applications. The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains contacts for the DOT sign shop and examples of different types of signs.

The tools contained in this section are:
- Project Signs
- Meeting Announcement Signs
- Special Purpose Signs
- Interpretive Signs

Definition

Project signs are placed strategically around a project site to alert businesses, residents, park/trail users or other interested parties that a project is underway. These signs are used when a project is in the design or construction phase. The sign needs to include the name of the project, its completion date and a point of contact with a phone number. Project signs can range from a simple laminated poster hung on a construction site fence to a self-supporting, more permanent sign with a box that holds fliers. As signs are often used for long periods of time and can be exposed to the elements, they should be made of an appropriately durable material. Generally, local sign requirements differ from city to city, so planning for signage should be part of the contract for a construction job.

How Project Signs Support the Project

A project sign is a good tool to give point of contact information to stakeholders. Installing a sign at a project site in advance of work alerts the public to the project and can stimulate them to seek additional information. Use the current King County logo and appropriate font size in the design of all signs.

When to Use

Use project signs when a project is about to begin, is undergoing changes or delays, or is underway. Many local jurisdictions require a project sign as part of the permitting process. right-of-way and permitting staff lead the installation of signs required by permitting processes, in coordination with the community relations planners and environmental planners. Environmental planning staff are responsible for State Environmental Policy Act public notice signage.

When Not to Use

Project signs are not a good tool to use early in the planning phase of a project or before a specific project schedule with an end date has been determined. They are also inappropriate if a specific site or affected area is not yet identified

Resources

Time: Varies depending on complexity of the sign. Usually, the most complicated sign can be completed and installed in a matter of weeks.

Cost: Simple signs are very low cost and can be quickly produced and laminated using in-house resources. More permanent signs can cost several hundred dollars plus installation costs. They can be produced and installed by the King County Department of Transportation's Sign Shop.

Staff: Staff time is needed to design, produce and install signs.

Definition

Meeting announcement signs are temporary signs that announce the date and location of a meeting. They are placed in front of the meeting location or at a location near the project area under discussion. These are also known as sandwich signs.

How Meeting Announcement Signs Support the Project

Meeting announcement signs can serve as a reminder to people to attend a meeting. These signs can also help direct traffic to the event location. In order to compete successfully with the many messages a person receives in a day, it is recommended that meeting announcement signs be used in combination with other outreach tools to reinforce a project's key messages.

When to Use

Use meeting announcement signs when an audience is located in a centralized geographic area. Place the signs for a short period of time (e.g., the day before or the day of a meeting.) Remove the signs promptly and be aware that they may "walk away," as they are versatile and useful items.

When Not to Use

Meeting announcement signs are not advised when the audience is spread throughout a city; the targeted audience may never see the signs. Do not use sandwich signs if a sign is needed for more than a day or two. More permanent project signs would be called for in this situation.

Resources

Time: Meeting announcement signs can be quickly produced and set up. Staff time will be required to develop tailored text that can be affixed to the signs.

Cost: Very low cost.

Staff: Sandwich signs are checked out through WTD community relations staff.

Definition

Special purpose signs meet the specific needs of businesses located near the site of a construction project. For instance, a special purpose sign could highlight that the business remains open during construction. These signs are often made of a weather-resistant material like plastic. They can be generic so that the same sign can be used in a variety of locations to serve several businesses.

How Special Purpose Signs Support the Project

These types of signs support the project by easing impacts to effected businesses. They help people continue with their normal livelihoods, despite nearby construction. Special purpose signs are a concrete example of WTD's efforts to be a good neighbor.

When to Use

These signs should be used to help businesses located in the geographic vicinity of a project. Special purpose signs are created on an as needed basis to address concerns that come up in the course of construction.

When Not to Use

These signs are not used on every project, but in situations that call more additional, site-specific outreach. These signs are generally not appropriate for residential areas, although they may be used for multi-family or mixed use developments.

Resources

Time: They can be produced in less than a week by the King County Department of Transportation Sign Shop or a sign vendor.

Cost: Special purpose signs can be very low cost and quickly produced.

Staff: Staff may be required to work with business owners to determine proper locations to install the signs.

Definition

An interpretive sign explains the meaning of a site or a project and, as such, contains more information and graphics than a project sign. An interpretative sign is often part of an environmental education effort.

How Interpretive Signs Support the Project

An interpretive sign helps to explain a project in easy-to-understand terms and graphics. It helps to expand the public's awareness and understanding of an environmental activity, such as a stream or wetland restoration project, and to help orient them to a project area. Additionally, these signs can help accomplish management goals by encouraging and promoting public understanding of King County objectives.

When to Use

An interpretive sign may be used if a project is located in a park or if a wastewater project is conducted in conjunction with an environmental activity. Because they require considerable lead-time and special expertise to design, interpretive signs should be considered for larger or longer-duration projects. They can also be used as one component of permanent facility signage.

When Not to Use

These signs should not be used on every project, particularly short duration construction or routine maintenance projects.

Resources

Time: Interpretive signs require a long time (e.g. several-month lead time) to develop content and graphics. They should be attractive and complement the site where they will be placed.

Cost: Interpretive signs can be expensive to design and produce. The services of an artist or graphic designer may be required. Production and installation can be accomplished using the King County Department of Transportation's Sign Shop

Staff: It is advisable to enlist the support of a staff member with expertise in the act of interpreting the significance of a site or project, and explaining it in a manner that is clear and compelling.

Online Communications

Online communications offer a far-reaching means of delivering and receiving information that is available at any time and location. As households, businesses and libraries increase their online capabilities, electronic communications become a more essential public involvement tool for reaching various audiences.

Providing staff and resources to keep web sites and electronic communications current is important to consider early in a project. Thought should be given to how information will be offered and how often it will be updated. For example, residents will not likely return to a web site looking for information on a project if all they see is a link to a PDF version of a brochure they have just received in the mail. Rather, they will be looking for current information such as a project description, anticipated impacts, contact information, comment forms, maps, documents and links to additional information.

Like any large organization, King County has specific policies and procedures for posting information on the County or DNRP web site. The web team uses templates and style sheets. There are policies for developing content, testing, reviewing and externally linking to other sites. The King County Intranet (for internal use) provides information about content creation, marketing and working with consultants.

This tool kit for online communications is not complete. Certain emerging and potentially useful technologies--such as bulletin boards, moderated lists, discussion groups and the like--have not been addressed by King County's Web Services group and are not addressed at this time. As the County and WTD bring new technologies online, these guidelines will be updated.

The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains Web publishing definitions, guidelines and responsibilities for King County. A users guide for the public involvement module of the WTD Project Management and Financial Forecasting Database is also available. The *Community Relations Database Users Guide – For Windows* provides a step-by-step guide to getting started with the public involvement module of the database and provides standards for inputting data. It is regularly updated and a copy is available in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

The technical library is available in the intranet and has an online catalogue (http://dnr-web.metrokc.gov).

The tools contained in this section are:

- King County DNRP Website (Internet)
- Online Surveys
- Online Comment Forms
- Electronic Forums
- Online Libraries
- E-mail Distribution Lists
- WTD Public Involvement Database

Definition

The primary goal for the King County DNRP Web site is to be a content-rich tool that informs and educates the public. It is publicly accessible and contains general information about DNRP along with specific information about WTD projects and programs displayed with consistent navigation and messages. The address is http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wtd/.

How the DNRP Web Site Supports the Project

A web site is used to display information about a program or project. The amount of information posted on a site can be a few paragraphs, one page, a small site (5-10 pages) or a larger site (10 or more web pages). The size depends on the scope and complexity of the project.

The WTD webmaster can help assess what kind of a web presence, if any, is needed for a project and which staff and resources should be used (internal versus consultants). The webmaster can also provide guidance on policies and procedures. It is important to involve the webmaster early in the development of any project that is considering a web presence.

Using the web for outreach demonstrates openness to keeping the general public informed and engaged. All project web sites should be included under the WTD web site in order to provide the general public with a consistent "look and feel," navigation and messages about all King County WTD projects. (A project web site is **not** independent of the WTD site, such as on a consultant's or staff member's web site).

Updates and changes to a web site can be made quickly and will be widespread, unlike print, which cannot be corrected once it is distributed. A web site can be creative (i.e.: create a "virtual public meeting" by posting materials and comment forms presented at a public meeting).

When to Use

Use the Internet to supplement a well-thought-out community relations plan. Remember that not all sectors or residents of King County have access to computers. Use the Internet as a way to post additional information about a project, including technical documents, urban design drawings and comments.

When Not to Use

This tool will not be effective if staff resources are not dedicated to keeping a page or small site updated with new information. Because the Internet is often the *first* place people go to get information, it should not be the *last* place that project managers remember to update. It should be included as one part of a mix of outreach tools, not relied on as the sole tool. Do not use the

	Internet as a project management tool; instead, use it as a public information, involvement and outreach tool.
Resources	**Time:** Staff and review time will be needed in order to design and set up the page or site, and to get materials posted accurately and quickly. **Cost:** The WTD webmaster charges development time to the project. **Staff:** A staff person should be identified who can work with the web team to coordinate and support project initiatives. The WTD webmaster should be consulted about content, development and posting to the site.

Definition

An online survey is a web-based response poll to obtain information and feedback about a project or program.

How Online Surveys Support the Project

Online surveys can provide convenience to individuals who might not or cannot attend meetings and wish to provide input. It provides input from a cross-section of the public, not just those on a mailing list. There is generally a higher response rate for online surveys than mail-in surveys. Some tradeoffs to using online surveys include results that generally are not statistically valid and can easily be skewed (i.e., if one visitor submits the same survey response multiple times). Also, because of the nature of the Internet, geographic control is not possible.

Online surveys have not been widely used in WTD, though they have been used by DNRP and by the County Executive. It is a good idea to work with the Community Relations staff and the WTD webmaster early in the process to determine the need for online surveys and the best technology available to help reach the goals of the project.

When to Use

Decide early in the process when this technology will be used and evaluate how and if the survey results will benefit the project. Online surveys tend to receive better results from a large geographic area, rather than smaller areas. An online survey can be used as a "decision-making" input tool during pre-design and design phases to understand community values and concerns. Online surveys can be especially useful in complementing printed survey forms; they give residents the option of responding through postal mail, the Internet, fax machine and by telephone. The technology can be set up so that responses collected through online forms can be delivered directly to a project planner as e-mail messages, or placed in a data file for compilation, analysis and presentation. An online survey can also be used as an evaluation tool to determine how the public perceived the value of the project, how it was implemented and how communication efforts were received.

When Not to Use

Don't be tempted to use technology for technology's sake. Instead, the community relations planner should consider the public involvement elements and information the project team intends to get from a survey. An example of when not to use an online survey would be to take a poll or vote on a project that is no longer in the decision-making phase. This strategy leaves the visitor with the impression that their participation will effect a change when in actuality the decision(s) have already been made.

Resources

Time: Work with the WTD webmaster to determine appropriate lead-time for this undertaking. Surveys need to be developed and approved before they are posted online.

Cost: Costs can vary over time as available technologies improve. The WTD webmaster charges development time to the project.

Staff: Staff time should be considered, as it can be labor intensive to create a survey that achieves its intended the results. Work with the WTD webmaster to discuss available technologies to reach project goals.

Definition

Online comments forms are used on project Web sites to receive feedback from the public.

How Online Comments Support the Project

An online comment form encourages participants to review issues, write personal opinions and carefully word a concern that can be sent anonymously and at any time. People who do not or cannot usually attend meetings may provide input through an online comment form.

When to Use

A form can be as simple and unstructured as an e-mail that the visitor can send or it can be a form that elicits more specific information. Options to join a mailing list can be added to help build outreach efforts. It is a good idea to work with the WTD Web team early in the process to determine the best technologies available that will help reach the goals of the project.

Using printed materials and public meetings to inform people about the online form is an effective way to promote it. Online comment forms can be especially useful in complementing printed forms; they give residents an optional way to respond that is available at any time. The technology can be set up so that responses collected through online forms can be delivered directly to a planner as e-mail messages, or placed in a data file for compilation, analysis and presentation. Online comment forms are helpful feedback tools, especially when the project has an established Web presence. Use in conjunction with other forms of gathering input.

When Not to Use

If you do not have the resources to respond to incoming comments in a timely manner, this is probably not a good tool to use. Also, if you are not otherwise gathering input on a project decision, you may not want to use an online form because it could convey more importance to comments than is appropriate—consider gathering responses through mail, e-mail and phone calls instead.

Resources

Time: Time will be required to collect and compile comments, as well as provide responses.

Cost: An e-mail link to receive comments has virtually no cost. A more specific form may entail staff time to develop and programming time to implement on King County servers. Work with the WTD webmaster for specifics.

Staff: Staff time and project resources may be needed for this technology. Designate staff to receive, collect, log and respond to online comments as necessary.

Definition

An online dialogue or way for people to "gather" digitally to discuss a mutually interesting topic online. These take many forms, including newsgroups, mailing lists, message boards, "live" chat rooms and online council meetings (e.g., King County).

How Electronic Forums Support the Project

A discussion group can be of great value, as it can serve as the glue that holds Web site visitors together. Moderated groups, where someone from the project reviews messages before they are posted, tend to be most civil; messages are on-point and edited for clarity, and disparaging remarks can be controlled. Discussion groups connect people to a wide-reaching network of information. Information sharing takes place at any time of the day. A chat room can feature special guests with whom participants can talk, such as elected officials, division managers and project experts.

When to Use

At the present time, they should be carefully considered. These techniques can be very useful forums for discussion and they take a lot of attention to get started and to keep momentum going. If you cannot moderate a discussion group, you should post a "rules & policies" entry page for new visitors that prohibits unwanted activities and subject matter. A chat room needs a "live" moderator to ensure that discussions stay on topic and that disruptive guests are removed. The chat room could be set up and announced to occur at specific times, similar to announcing a public meeting.

When Not to Use

Moderating an online discussion requires much more time and effort than an automated, non-moderated group. Some people don't like the idea of being censored or controlled. Posted rules should note that irrelevant comments will be removed

Simply posting a message board area will not generally start a group discussion. The site's content will attract and drive the success of a discussion group.

Resources

Time: If moderated, a discussion group can require a significant time investment for reading and monitoring messages.

Cost: Consult with the WTD webmaster for budgeting assistance.

Staff: A staff person must have time dedicated to serve as moderator (i.e., vetting messages, posing discussion questions, etc.)

Definition

This is an organized collection of documents, reports and resources posted on a Web site. The collection provides information about programs or projects. DNRP has a Technical Document and Research Center. Searches can be conducted online on the DNRP intranet, which can be found at http://dnr-web.metrokc.gov/dnrlibrary/index.htm.

How Online Libraries Support the Project

These online tools provide a resource where individuals and organizations can easily locate, review and print out materials and information about a program or project. Placing documents in an online library can save time, paper and postage. Project managers can post large technical memos, reports and issue papers so they are accessible to interested stakeholders or the public. These libraries can serve as a project repository where all materials can be posted and referred to at a later date (e.g., agendas, meeting summaries, attendance lists, etc.)

When to Use

Online libraries are useful to post final documents for the public, consultants, engineers and others to download and print. Documents are best posted as Adobe Acrobat PDF files; a format that can reduce document size and provide universal readability across various computer platforms and applications. Supplement your online library by making important public documents available at public libraries and for mailing. It should be noted that most public libraries have Internet access for patrons.

When Not to Use

Posting a draft version or outdated information is not recommended for technical documents and memos. Accessibility and downloading issues should be kept in mind, especially for people who use telephone modems for connecting to the Internet. Large documents can be time consuming and sometimes costly to download.

Resources

Time: Staff time is needed to convert documents into formats that are easy to download and accessible.

Cost: Relatively low cost.

Staff: Staff should be allocated to keep libraries up to date and in order.

Definition

This is a tool for reaching out to people (residents, staff, affected public) who have specifically requested to be updated and notified of meetings and other project or program information by e-mail. It can be considered an online version of a project mailing list.

How E-mail Distribution Lists Support the Project

Electronic distribution of information is inexpensive and a quick and easy way to get information circulated to many people. In fact, more and more of the public prefer to receive information electronically. Messages and attached materials can be forwarded easily to interested parties. Requesting addresses can be done during public meetings (through a sign-in sheet), or through a project Web site, survey or request forms included in a newsletter.

When to Use

This is a great tool to get information quickly circulated to a self-selected audience. Use it as a tool to support a comprehensive outreach effort. Managers can craft messages that contain single pieces of information such as public meeting reminders or longer project updates sent out on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly). Project updates are usually more detailed and can contain links that point people to a project Web site for additional information.

When Not to Use

An e-mail distribution list should not be the primary, stand-alone outreach tool and should be used in conjunction with other efforts so that all segments of the population are reached with important project information (project milestones, public meetings, hearings, etc.) Issues such as access to technology, skill level and computer requirements should be taken into consideration. While usage is growing and availability at libraries is popular, online services and computers reach only a fraction of the total population. Be sure a resident has given you permission to be added to an e-mail list. Mass-delivered, unsolicited e-mail messages are considered “spam” and are most unwelcome.

Resources

Time: Time is required to build an e-mail distribution list and to keep it updated every time a new message is sent. Consider staff time for developing messages that are easy to read and concisely cover the subject matter.

Cost: Very low cost

Staff: Staff time is needed to collect, enter and retrieve e-mail addresses in the database.

Definition

The WTD public involvement database is a module of the WTD project management and financial forecasting database. The database is a collection of information that can be organized, updated, sorted, and searched as needed to support a project.

How the Database Supports the Project

This tool contains two modules. The contacts and activities modules are used to assist staff with managing the large amount of information associated with the public involvement portions of WTD projects. Besides storing information that can be useful to a project, its sorting capabilities can be used to develop mailing lists and labels, and conduct research on facilities and projects.

When to Use

This tool is a starting point for information needed to support public involvement activities. This database can be used as a research tool to gather information about a specific facility and the surrounding residents. The database can be used for tracking residents' concerns about a particular issue, project or facility. The information in the database can be used to develop customized and targeted communications for stakeholders and affected interests. The database should also be updated during and at the conclusion of a project, in order to maintain current and accurate information.

A users guide for this database is available. The *Community Relations Database Users Guide – For Windows* provides a step-by-step guide to getting started with these modules of the database and provides standards for inputting data. It is regularly updated and a copy is available in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

When Not to Use

The database should not be used alone or as the only source for information on a project or facility.

Resources

Time: Consider the staff time needed to input and update data in the system. This point cannot be overstated.

Cost: The costs to maintain and use the database are minimal and primarily include the staff time needed to enter data in a standardized way.

Staff: Administrative, interns and temporary workers

Public Information Distribution

Several different techniques can be used to distribute printed materials to the public. Selection of a distribution method should be based on an understanding of the target audience and how the audience wants or needs to receive information (refer the needs assessment and public involvement plan in Section 3). Techniques should be tailored to the type of audience. For example, renters and residents of multi-family dwellings are often effectively reached through the door-to-door delivery of fliers.

Tools should also be selected based on the type of project and the outreach area. Door hanging, for instance, is a good method to use along sewer alignments to reach residents who will be directly impacted by construction activities. A combination of techniques should be considered for broader coverage.

Strategies for distribution should be developed in conjunction with the project team, considering right-of-way, permitting and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements. Legal requirements for distribution (e.g., SEPA's requirements for public notification) should be evaluated. A useful tool to help develop a distribution strategy is the WTD community relations database, which can be searched by zip code for existing contacts.

Electronic distribution methods can be found in the online communications group of tools. Information on bill stuffers and newspaper inserts can be found in the printed materials group of tools.

All printed materials must contain the legally required Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) statement. Please refer to the King County Office of Civil Rights Enforcement, *Checklist for Accessible Printed Materials* for the appropriate statements and font sizes. The statements provide information and phone numbers if questions arise regarding special accommodations for printed materials and meeting accommodations. Examples of the ADA notices also can be found on the templates provided in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

The resource guide contains references on how to prepare mailings, lists of vendors, where to get plastic bags for door hanging, and related topics.

The tools contained in this section are:

- Mail Houses
- U.S. Postal Service Bulk Rates
- Zip Code and Carrier Route Mailings
- Mailing Lists
- Door Hanging
- Direct Contact
- Public Libraries
- Grapevine/Word of Mouth

Definition

Mail houses provide the suite of services necessary to complete mass mailings. These services range from preparing the physical pieces of mail (including folding, stuffing, addressing, and applying postage) to helping compile mailing lists by researching and identifying mailing areas. While the County provides information and materials for a mailing, the mail house, once given the proper direction, can do all the legwork of assembling and distributing information through the mail.

The staff of a mailing house is knowledgeable about the costs and regulations on different types of mailings. Mail house equipment automates the process of assembling large mailings by hand.

How Mail Houses Support the Project

Mail houses support the project by centralizing the effort and the information needed to complete a mailing. They may be provided with a numerous sources of address data that apply to a single mailing. For example, they can prepare a mailing that combines a list of carrier routes, a list of property owner addresses and a list generated by the database. Mail houses provide a way to transmit the projects goals, schedule and other details to a wide but targeted population.

Most mail houses also offer software to help identify and mail to a specific geographic area. Given a single street address, these programs can generate a list of all addresses encompassed within a specified radius of that starting point. This software can be particularly helpful when distributing information to neighborhoods surrounding a construction site or to large areas that might be impacted by a street closure.

When to Use

Mail houses typically handle large distribution areas. It is more cost effective and faster to use a mail house when mailing to carrier routes, using bulk mail or sending to a mailing list that includes numerous address data sources.

When Not to Use

Mail houses are less useful for sensitive immediate news that affects a small number of people, such as residents along an alignment whose electricity will be shut off the next day. For small-scale mailings, it may be more cost effective to produce the mailing in-house.

Resources

Time: Depending on the size of the mailing, a mail house will need up to two weeks of lead time prior to the mailing date. Staff need up to two weeks of lead-time prior to the mailing date. Staff time is needed to prepare the content of the mailing and select the data sources for the mailing list.

Cost: Cost depends on the size of the mailing and type of postage used.

Staff: Several mail houses are under contract with King County.

Definition

Mail can be sent through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) using single-piece or less expensive bulk mailing rates. Single-piece means that full postage rate must be paid (i.e. $0.37 for a first-class letter) – even if you are mailing a large quantity of items. Bulk or presorted mail refers to mail that has be specially prepared for mailing at reduced postage rates. To receive a bulk mail discount, mail must be presorted by the sender into zip-code groupings, bundled and/or delivered to certain centralized post facilities. Bulk mail provides a discount over single-piece mail because the sender is, in effect, doing some of the work that would have otherwise been done by the Post Office.

To use bulk mail, you must have a bulk mail permit and indicia. WTD maintains both bulk mail and business reply permits. These permit numbers are available through the community relations staff. The USPS has many requirements for bulk mail as well as a legal disclaimer on the timeframe on bulk mail delivery. There are also postal requirements on the size of the item and the minimum number of items needed to qualify for bulk rates.

Any mailing, whether single-piece or bulk, is subject to the USPS rate structure (i.e. First-class Mail, Standard Mail, Parcel Post, etc.). Refer to the USPS website, www.usps.gov, for a discussion of what type and size of mail to send under each rate. A bulk mailing can be performed for any rate category. For instance, a bulk mailing of first-class mail provides a reduction on the first-class rate and offers a better guarantee of timeliness than a bulk mailing of standard mail or parcel post.

How Bulk Rates Support the Project

Selecting the appropriate mail rates allows the cost of a mailing to be balanced against other factors such a schedule, project budget and the timeliness or sensitivity of the information being mailed. Being aware of and strategic about selecting rate options enables smart choices about how to transmit information to a population.

When to Use

Use bulk mail when sending large quantities of information through USPS, especially when cost is a concern and adequate lead-time has been allowed. Contracting with a mail house is strongly recommended if sending bulk mail. These companies have automated equipment and the expertise to comply with postal requirements. The type of permit selected (e.g., First or Third Class) should be based on the schedule requirements of the project. After verifying the delivery guarantees associated with each rate, select one meets that the project's the legal and logistical needs.

When Not to Use

Do not use bulk mail without doing some initial investigation into the preparation and permit requirements. The regulations of bulk mail can be complicated and preparing a bulk mailing is time-consuming. Do not embark on an in-house bulk mailing under an extremely tight deadline.

Resources

Time: It is faster to use mail houses for bulk mailings. Staff time may be required to investigate mail rate options and select one that is appropriate for the project.

Cost: Bulk mail is less expensive than first class mail, but delivery time is longer.

Staff: Using a mail house can be less expensive because the sorting and labeling process is automated.

Definition

Mail sent through the USPS can be delivered to a group of recipients in a specified area. In addition to personally-addressed mailings to individual recipients, three geographical classifications exist in the USPS structure that allow King County to mail to large groups of people in a particular zone or area: zip code, zip plus four and carrier route.

Zip code mailings target all addresses within a specific five-digit zip. For an extremely targeted mailing, a "zip plus four" mailing goes to all addresses that share the same zip and four-digit code. A carrier route mailing targets all addresses that share the same zip code and the first two digits of the four-digit code. Keep in mind that all zip codes and carrier routes are not equal in geographic spread. A carrier route in a dense urban area like Seattle might be limited to a handful of blocks while a carrier route in rural King County might span many miles.

Note that the USPS term "Enhanced Carrier Route rates" refers to a way of preparing a quantity of Standard Mail for bulk mailing. It involves specific requirements for sorting and bundling. One can send mail to a certain carrier route (using single-piece rates) without complying with the requirements of Enhanced Carrier Route rates. See the U.S. Postal Service rates tool in this group.

How Zip Code and Carrier Route Mailings Support the Project

Using zip code and carrier route mailings is a way to distribute materials and information to residents of an area that may be affected by or have an interest in a project. Zip code and carrier route mailings save time and increase accuracy by eliminating the need to create a mailing list of specific addresses. For example, the Eastside Interceptor project in Renton needed to disseminate information about disruptive construction impacts to the residents in the neighborhood surrounding the project. Although an accurate mailing list existed for residents directly along the project alignment, the project team used a carrier route mailing to send project information to anyone living within a half-mile radius of the project.

When to Use

Zip code and carrier route mailings are typically used for a large distribution area within geographically specific limits. They work well for informing residents near a project site about construction impacts or inviting residents in a certain area to attend an event. It is more cost-effective to use a mail house to do carrier route mailings as most mail houses have software to determine zip and carrier routes.

If a mailing house does not offer this service or if a mailing is being prepared in-house, post offices offer resources, including zip code maps and books that cross-reference street names and zip codes.

When Not to Use

Zip code and carrier route mailings are not as useful for sensitive or personalized information that affects a small number of people. Carrier route and zip code mailings come addressed to "resident," and this lack of personal attention may cause recipients to disregard the mailing. For very small distribution areas, the time necessary to research and coordinate a zip code or carrier route mailing might be better spent on door hanging. See the door hanging tool in this group.

Resources

Time: It is faster to use a mail house for zip code and carrier route mailings than to prepare them in-house. If the mailing is being prepared by WTD staff, time must be spent identifying the appropriate postal codes and complying with USPS regulations.

Cost: Zip code and carrier route costs should be included in mail house fees.

Staff: Several mail houses are under contract with King County.

Definition

Mailing lists are used as a basis for generating mailings to residents and other interested parties for newsletters, fliers and project information. They are basic building blocks of a good public involvement program and allow the project to contact many people at one time.

Mailing lists can be created from various sources: assessor's lists, other King County divisions, cities, component agencies, utilities, special interest groups and other counties. The database may also be used to generate mailing lists. Other public involvement activities will help build mailing lists (e.g., meeting sign-in sheets, direct contacts and replies to direct mailings).

These sources can be combined with each other and with zip code and/or carrier route mailings to make a master mailing list for a project. A mail house can be helpful in integrating address data from many different sources.

How Mailing Lists Support the Project

Mailing lists are a good way to communicate information to a select group. A well-organized, computerized list simplifies administrative tasks related to circulating project information to residents and affected parties. Mailing lists should include telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. A well-maintained database can be invaluable for developing mailing lists. A substantial and effective mailing list can be created by simply querying the database based on criteria that relates to the project.

When to Use

Mailing lists are best used when the goal is to quickly distribute information to a targeted audience. Check with the community relations staff whether mailing lists for the project area already exist. Mailing lists of previously involved stakeholders are useful for keeping interested parties up to date on project activities. Mailing lists may be more effective when combined with other forms of distribution to reach the target audience.

Remember that keeping mailing lists current and accurate is a dynamic and ongoing process. Always update a mailing list with new information and remove outdated information as needed.

When Not to Use

Mailing lists are not as useful for widespread, geographically specific information that would be best communicated through a zip code/carrier route mailing or by the media. Mailings cannot replace the face-to-face contact of meetings, workshops, community fairs or focus groups.

Resources

Time: It is time-intensive to maintain a solid mailing list, but careful maintenance can pay off in reduced numbers of returned pieces of mail after each mailing.

Cost: There is generally no cost associated with obtaining mailing lists from government or utility sources. Cost may be involved in obtaining mailing lists through commercial companies. A list can be maintained in a spreadsheet or database program like Microsoft Excel or Access.

Staff: Project staff will need to decide what kind of mailing list to use, then obtain and maintain it.

Definition

Door hanging is a distribution method in which fliers or other materials are hand-delivered to the doors of the target audience. Typically, fliers are placed in plastic bags and hung on doorknobs.

How Door Hanging Supports the Project

Door hanging is an effective method to ensure that a group of people in a defined geographic area receives distributed materials. Door hanging is an excellent way to draw attention to the project and to target current residents of an area (especially renters).

When to Use

Door hanging should be used when there is an immediate need for a small population to be informed of project activities. The most common use is to inform residents about construction activities that will disrupt their daily routines by generating loud noises and odors, eliminating on-street parking or creating traffic detours. Door hanging is also an effective way to reach residents along a sewer alignment or adjacent to a construction site.

When Not to Use

Do not use door hanging to reach large areas or large numbers of residences (more than 500). Door hanging is best used to reach less than 200 residences. Door hanging is not usually suitable for commercial areas or businesses. This distribution technique is slightly more expensive than other methods ($0.40 per piece as opposed to $0.37 with first class mail); therefore, it is best used in situations in which the target audience will be severely impacted by the project. It is not always the most effective way to reach people as it is subject to human error – distributors might not be able to reach all units in an apartment building, might miss doors or might run into dogs or uncooperative residents. Be sure to evaluate other forms of distribution to reach the target audience.

Resources

Time: Minimal staff time is required to prepare to do a door hanging. Drawing a distribution area on a map is all that is required. Once the materials are copied, it generally takes 1-2 days for door hanging companies to deliver materials to each target property, depending on the size of the distribution area.

Cost: Door hanging is more expensive than distributing materials by first-class mail at single-piece rates. However, first-class and even bulk mail may prove to be more expensive than door hanging for large distributions once staff prep time and/or mail house fees are factored in. Compare prices before selecting door hanging.

Staff: Project staff must be involved in drafting and approving the materials to be distributed. Staff should consider the format for the information piece (e.g., size of bag to be used, design elements to draw attention to area that is visible in the bag).

Definition

Direct contact means interacting with the public by knocking on doors; communicating by e-mail or telephone; and attending community events (refer to public meetings group of tools). It is a proactive, two-way technique. In some cases direct contact is required, such as during an emergency response (e.g., to overflows). Contacts are typically informal and may be coupled with business cards and/or other printed materials to "take away".

How Direct Contact Supports the Project

Direct contact is an excellent way to build working relationships and for the public to have their concerns personally addressed by project staff. Direct one-on-one contacts allow County staff to understand an individual's concerns and to develop ways to address them away from the spotlight of a public meeting.

When to Use

Direct contact is best used to communicate immediate, sensitive impacts and to develop resolution strategies. Staff must have time to research issues and questions and provide responses promptly.

When Not to Use

It is not a good use of time or budget to employ direct contact for routine information updates and events that are not critical. Safety is another issue to take into consideration when staff enter a private home.

Resources

Time: Direct contact is a time-consuming technique for project staff.

Cost: The primary costs involved are for the staff labor to spend time contacting people.

Staff: Project staff must be knowledgeable and be able to communicate well with the public.

Definition

Public information materials and technical reports, environmental impact statements and other project documents can be placed in public libraries for viewing. This can include distributing handouts (such as fliers and brochures) or displaying posters. It can also include cataloguing technical documents for public loan or reference use.

How Public Libraries Supports the Project

By sending information to community or branch libraries, the project can target specific neighborhoods. The public often appreciates the opportunity to review documents on evenings or weekends outside of daytime working hours.

When to Use

Place handouts in local libraries that have brochure racks or space and disseminate them to a local jurisdiction. Place technical documents in reference sections during formal public comment periods or if a document is of interest to members of the public.

Check regulatory requirements to see if the establishment of information repositories or administrative records is required. For example, National Environmental Policy Act and Superfund regulations require the establishment of information repositories. Other locations for information repositories are government offices (such as King County's Technical Resource Library) or the University of Washington's government documents library. The documents supporting a State Environmental Policy Act/National Environmental Policy Act environmental document should be referenced in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). These documents must be publicly available or attached as appendices to the EIS. Depending on scope and magnitude of a project, an information repository may be established at one or more locations.

When Not to Use

For small projects without significant controversy or public interest, it may not be necessary to set up a repository.

Resources

Time: Minimal time commitment is needed to select and duplicate the documents to be stored at the repository. Updating the collection with new materials may be necessary as the project progresses.

Cost: Libraries usually do not charge a fee to store government documents.

Staff: Project staff would need to select the documents and provide updates as necessary.

Definition

Word of mouth is a powerful means of communication that is fast and has the appearance of credibility. It is a grassroots approach in which citizens talk to each other and to their employees, who in turn spread information to their friends and associates.

How the Grapevine Supports the Project

The grapevine supports the project by spreading information through the informal conversations about a project or program. Many times, County employees have opportunities to talk to their neighbors regarding the specifics of a program or project. These informational conversations can help build an everyday understanding of an issue, project or program.

When to Use

The grapevine is something that everyone seems to use. It has a credibility all its own and is generally believed by all. It can be used to correct rumors and to complement more formal methods of communication.

When Not to Use

Word of mouth is a difficult communication method to control. It should not be used to explain complex issues that require detailed explanations by an informed party or expert. However, this form of communication happens anyway and efforts should be made to provide as much accurate information as possible to circulate on the grapevine.

Resources

Time: Very little time is involved. Most of the effort of the grapevine takes place in everyday conversations with the public and co-workers about a project.

Cost: Costs are minimal.

Staff: Staff time is minimal since the grapevine is perpetuated in the daily course of conversations and project planning.

Media

News media strategies inform targeted audiences about projects and programs through newspapers, magazines, radio, television and videos. The news media provide a means to help disseminate information and can be a valuable partner in informing people about a project or program. Effective media strategies deliver a uniform message when planned as part of an integrated public involvement program.

Many people rely on the media as their primary source of news and information. These people may be stakeholders who will not attend a public meeting or read a project-specific newsletter. Incorporating the news media into the overall public involvement strategy increases the chance of reaching these stakeholders and perhaps stimulating them to participate.

Always consider the "Five Ws" of news coverage – who, what, where, when, why and how. While there is no reliable definition, an effective news story will have at least a couple of these characteristics:

- It affects large numbers of people.
- It is important to those people.
- It will interest or touch the emotions of many people.
- It is new and fresh, not done or heard of before.
- It is related to another issue or event that already gets lots of attention.

The key question to ask is: Is this statement, project, event or person of potential interest or importance to a significant number of people in WTD's service area or a portion of the service area?

A media strategy should be well thought out for a project. Within WTD, there is an organizational knowledge base of working with the media. The community relations staff, including the WTD media planner, can help bring these resources to the project.

There are many things to consider and a well-defined plan can lead to good headlines versus misunderstood information. People who work in the news media are busy and have little time to devote to one particular story. For instance, a TV crew may have less than an hour to put together a story; a radio reporter may have two hours; and a newspaper reporter one day. The media can be a great ally if approached correctly.

News media relations for the King County Wastewater Treatment Division are based on honesty, responsiveness and coordination:

- **Honesty.** Honesty and responsiveness are essential to good news media relations. We must provide complete, accurate and straightforward information as quickly as possible.
- **Response time.** Internal meetings and other activities should be interrupted to respond to a news media inquiry.
- **Emergencies.** When emergencies may affect service, public health or the environment, or attract public attention, operating personnel must contact media relations or public affairs immediately—following procedures outlined in *The WTD Overflow Manual*.

- **Coordination.** Whenever a news reporter requests information about WTD, staff members must notify media relations promptly. WTD media relations staff will help ensure that all information provided to the news media is accurate, current and complete.
- **Spokespersons.** WTD media relations, working with management and the DNRP Public Affairs Office, will designate spokespersons. Depending on the project, program or issue, the spokesperson may be the County Executive, DNRP director, WTD manager, other appropriate managers, project managers or staff, or a public affairs or WTD media relations representative.
- **News release authority**. WTD media relations, working as necessary with DNRP public affairs, will authorize all news releases or other media contacts initiated by the Division. Media relations staff will produce all releases and aid staff in seeking news coverage.

The DNRP Public Affairs Office and WTD media relations staff have developed positive relationships with many of the news media. Media relations staff will respond 24 hours a day to help WTD respond to and plan media coverage that will create a positive view of King County, DNRP and WTD programs, projects and operations. Here are five general situations when a community relations planner should ask for help:

- **There is an emergency and the questions will probably start any minute.** Review emergency procedures and contact WTD media relations right away. Media relations staff will work with the media and make sure reporters have the facts they need to report on the problem completely, accurately and fairly.
- **Someone from the news media wants to interview a community relations planner—or has interviewed a planner.** A reporter calls to ask a planner about a project. If the planner is unsure about the information requested – or if the project involves more than routine or factual information that can be provided briefly – tell the reporter you will call back promptly after checking to be sure the information is complete and current. Then call WTD media relations. Staff will either advise the planner on responding to the reporter's questions or, if the planner is not the authorized spokesperson, coordinate a response by the spokesperson. If the planner has already responded, media relations should be alerted to discuss that contact as well as appropriate follow up.
- **Public—and media—interest in a program or project is anticipated because it is important or unusual**. WTD media relations staff will help planners anticipate questions that reporters may ask and develop a strategy for responding to the potential media attention.
- **There is something for which a planner wants media coverage**. WTD media relations staff will prepare and distribute news releases to newspapers, broadcast stations and other media. Staff will also arrange and coordinate news events, interviews, briefings and other direct contacts with the news media.
- **The way a policy, activity, project or program has been reported in a news story or discussed on an editorial page is of concern.** First consider what the consequences of the news coverage or editorial comment might be. Then contact WTD media relations for advice or to share concerns.

The DNRP Public Affairs Office and WTD media relations staff work together to coordinate all news media contact. Besides the guidelines in this document, please refer to the *Public Affairs Media Protocol* document available with the WTD media planner and in the Public Affairs Office for the specific details of news media relations for King County.

All King County printed materials must contain the legally required Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) statement. Please refer to King County Office of Civil Rights Enforcement, *Checklist for Accessible Printed Materials* for the appropriate statements and font sizes. The statements provide information and phone numbers if questions arise about special accommodations for printed materials and meeting accommodations. News releases announcing public events must include the meeting accommodations message; releases providing public contact information also must provide an alternative TTY number. Examples of the ADA notices also can be found in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

The tools contained in this section are:

- News Releases
- News Conferences
- Editorial Board Briefings
- Media Briefings
- Feature Stories
- Letters to the Editor
- TV Programming
- Call-In Shows
- Media Kits (Photo and Sound Opportunities)

Definition

A news release is written to make an announcement and explain with basic facts the “who, what, where, when, why and how” of a topic. It should be kept short and use simple, succinct language that includes all the necessary information and the “why” that makes this topic newsworthy. Releases are generally distributed to a targeted media list. All news releases are posted on the DNRP Web site to provide information to the news media and other online users.

How News Releases Support the Project

News releases are helpful in generating interest in a project and for getting the word out. Key messages and important information for the project should appear early in the release. The release date, relevant contact information and a headline identifying the topic at the top of the release improve its chances of being noticed by a media outlet. Many media outlets get an extraordinary number or new releases per day. WTD media relations, working with the DNRP Public Affairs Office, can help get a news release noticed by doing some follow-up work with media outlets.

DNRP’s Public Affairs Office and the WTD media planner work together to coordinate any and all news media contact. The media planner drafts most news releases and edits/reviews all releases before distribution. Please refer to the *Public Affairs Media Protocol* document, available with WTD media planners and in the Public Affairs Office, for the specific details of media relations for King County. Key messages in the news release should be tailored to highlight the project and program, and the release should be sent to the right news outlets.

When to Use

There are at least two reasons to use a news release with public involvement – to generate broad interest in your project and to raise awareness about your project with the public. Check with the WTD media planner before calling specific reporters to brief them on your news release. When appropriate, news releases about particular projects or locations may be distributed as a courtesy to interested elected officials or jurisdictions. They may choose to include the information in their newsletters and websites. More information about reporter briefings can be found in the media briefing tool in this group.

When Not to Use

Despite all the functions a news release can serve, by itself, it is not going to get you a lot of attention. The average news outlet, reporter and editor simply get too many releases. A release is only one part of an overall media and communications strategy.

Resources

Time: Depending on the timeframe and preference, news releases can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the intended media or public – all low-cost ways to get the information distributed.

Cost: Writing and distributing a news release is probably the most low-cost and relied upon aspect of a media strategy and provides a perspective about the project.

Staff: Working with WTD media relations staff, a community relations planner needs to establish a timeframe for scheduling a news release, providing project information to the media planner for drafting the release, reviewing the draft release, and distributing the release through the DNRP Public Affairs Office.

Definition

A news conference is an event where members of the media gather to hear a newsworthy announcement and pose questions about that announcement. Experts are generally on hand to answer high-level process questions or explain technical details.

How News Conferences Support the Project

Significant planning should be considered, particularly asking why a news conference is necessary for a project. The elements of a successful news conference include a spokesperson (DNRP or County management or an elected official), room, media kit materials, optional displays, staff and set up time. News conferences are helpful in bringing attention to a project when there is an important and timely announcement that affects a broad audience. Work with the WTD media planner and, if necessary, the Public Affairs Office to determine if a news conference is a necessary part of a project's media strategy. It is important to choose an agency spokesperson who can provide the media with short, succinct sound bites or talking points that can be easily incorporated into short newscasts on radio or TV. The spokesperson should be a high profile person to attract attention to the event.

When to Use

News conferences can be an effective tool to disseminate timely information that cannot be easily distributed in a news release or reporter briefing and that significantly impacts a large audience. News conferences work best for the broadcast media if there can be interesting sound and visual elements. A news conference -- or event held for the news media -- can be effective if held in a location that is related to the project.

When Not to Use

Instead of news conferences, consider inviting the news media to other related events that have -- or can have, with planning -- an effective news element. As a stand-alone, a news conference is generally not recommended, especially if the project is in the feedback (redesign, design or construction) phase. Unless there is a compelling reason, news conferences are complex to put together and it is difficult to get media to attend. Reporters generally are an independent group of individuals who want to pursue a story independent of each other. The strategy for a news conference is important; the right day and time can make all the difference. Also considering that "breaking" news may draw reporters away from your news conference. News conferences encourage reporters to ask their questions in a group setting, which is not popular if they want to guard the angle of their story. In addition, reporters don't have time to attend news conferences that offer little information. TV reporters especially dislike news conferences if the involve only talking heads, as they tend to do.

Resources

Time: Need to have a large enough room to accommodate TV crews, radio and the printed media outlets. The location should accommodate television and radio that will need to hook up into a sound system so that they can record the spokesperson giving the presentation and answering questions.

Cost: There are costs associated with the room rental, logistics and media kits.

Staff: News conferences can be staff-intensive and require staff to arrange all the logistics of the event, develop the strategy and messages and to serve as the spokesperson and other specialists.

Definition

Editorial board briefings can be an effective part of an overall media strategy. They include a scheduled visit and briefing to a newspaper's editorial board on a topical issue, program or project that has regional significance to the newspaper's readership/circulation area. Editorial board meetings are typically led by the editorial page editor and include editorial writers. They may include editors and reporters from other sections of the newspaper (environment, education, health, local government, etc.). Be aware that on many daily newspapers, editorial page staff and news staff work independently and must be approached separately. Informing or influencing one staff may not affect the work of the other. Editorial board briefings should be arranged and attended by WTD media relations, working with the DNRP Public Affairs Office.

How Editorial Board Briefings Support the Project

An editorial board briefing can offer additional information to a newspaper on broad-reaching and topical agency issues, programs or projects. It is not a "deadline driven" meeting. A briefing allows more detailed information to be shared and combined with time for questions and answers from the editors. It can result in an editorial written by a well-informed editorial writer that is a benefit to the County's overall goals or mission.

When to Use

Editorial board visits are used very sparingly and should be attended by key, well-known agency staff. Coordinate with WTD media relations staff to determine if a visit is a necessary part of your media strategy. The staff that attends the briefing should be prepared to answer questions about all aspects of the issues, program or project, as editors from various sections of the newspaper may have different interests for their targeted readership. Be prepared to discuss the issue from the perspective of WTD's constituency. In other words, be prepared to present all sides of the issue, program or project. Presenting all sides of the issue shows the County's knowledge of its constituencies and proves to the newspaper that the County is a credible source of information. Editorial board visits are an opportunity to take quality time with a newspaper to discuss details relating to a topical issue. Usually, daily newspapers have editorial boards; however, many weekly papers can be interested in the same detailed information and will reserve time with their smaller staff. Weekly papers can be a critical source of information to smaller communities.

When Not to Use	An editorial board briefing should not be used to "sell" an idea to a newspaper. It is a venue for raising awareness on topical issues by spending time discussing the salient points. It should not be used as a means of promotion or advertising, except as a means to gain editorial support or understanding. Consultants should not conduct editorial board briefings.
Resources	**Time:** Time is needed to schedule the editorial board visits and assemble the agency team and materials. Media kits with detailed information should be provided at the briefing. **Cost:** The briefing costs include media kit materials, staff time and possible display boards. **Staff:** Staff time is needed to schedule and attend the briefing. It is important that the most knowledgeable staff regarding the issue, program or project attend the editorial board briefing. It is generally good to limit the team attendance to two or three staff.

Definition

Media briefings are short, informative sessions with reporters to communicate information on the status of a project or a series of projects. Generally they contain prepared statements on the specific topic. They should be held regularly with key reporters throughout a significant project to ensure that the reporters are up-to-speed with new information and aspects of topical issues, programs or projects. Check with the WTD media planner about including information in their everyday opportunities with reporters.

How Media Briefings Support the Project

Briefings should be part of on-going media relations. They are not only a useful way to keep the news media informed and up-to-speed on topical information, but are also a great way to build relationships with key reporters, making the contact a credible source of information at the County. Coordinate with WTD media relations staff to determine if this is a necessary part of a project's media strategy. When appropriate, consider taking the reporters on a field trip. That is a great way to provide photograph (print), sound (radio) and visual (TV) opportunities to tell their story. An ongoing briefing effort may be time consuming for key media relations staff, but can result in a greater overall understanding and communication of an issues, program or project in the long run.

When to Use

To communicate ongoing information about an issue, program or project that is of interest to a broad audience. An example of a successful outreach effort is the project to improve the Vashon Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. Periodic project updates of the local island weekly led to positive coverage of the project and was key to raising awareness and informing the community of newsworthy issues concerning the plant. Use briefings at key project milestones, but do so sparingly.

When Not to Use

Coordinate with the WTD media planner to determine if this is an appropriate tool for a particular project.

Resources

Time: Reporter briefings can be time consuming if the interested audience covers a large area and includes many reporters.

Cost: Costs include materials and staff time.

Staff: Specialized staff are needed to perform the briefings and develop needed materials.

Definition

Feature stories are in-depth stories about a specific issue, program or project and are produced to target a specific audience using a selected media outlet (TV, radio, print) that would best tell the story. They create human interest in agency activities and employee efforts. Check with the media relations staff to ensure that a feature story is an appropriate part of a project's media strategy. Often times, County staff will work with a specific reporter to provide background for a feature story. In some cases, media relations staff may choose to provide a written article accompanied by photos or video footage.

How Feature Stories Support the Project

Feature stories can leave a lasting impression on readers by providing light, human or touching information. They can heighten the perceived importance of a project. There are aspects of some programs or projects that lend themselves well to an interesting story. Some stories are better told in a visual medium, and others lend themselves well to radio, providing unique sounds that complement key points of the story. For example, a story about the value of a stormwater pond as bird habitat with an audiotape of birds singing in the background could be useful to radio.

When to Use

Consider using a feature story for major, long-term programs or projects that would benefit from a large audience's understanding of the complexities involved. The print medium is the most used method for feature stories, available in newspapers and magazines with photographs that bring home key points in the story.

When Not to Use

Feature stories compete with shorter news stories and may not be read. They take an investment of time to produce; therefore, they are not be the most cost-effective means of delivering short information that could be covered in a media briefing or news release.

Resources

Time: The time is needed to produce and place the feature story.

Cost: Cost can vary depending on if video footage, photos or sound opportunities accompany the story.

Staff: Staff time is needed to coordinate the feature story placement with the desired media.

Definition

Letters to the editor are sent by interested individuals about topical subjects and are published in the opinion/editorial section of a newspaper. They are usually short letters that contain a discussion and opinion about a given subject. In some cases they can come out in favor or against certain topics discussed in an editorial in an earlier issue. They are an effective means of a public discussion on a topic. Letters to the editor may be edited for clarity and brevity.

How Letters to the Editor Support the Project

An individual can write a letter to the editor that discusses aspects of programs or projects that can heighten the awareness or understanding of an issue. Sometimes, key stakeholders can be encouraged to express their ideas in a letter to the editor with the intention of raising the public's awareness of the complexity of issues. A letter to the editor can be used to respond to other letters, particularly if planned to respond to inaccurate or unclear information.

When to Use

Letters to the editor can be useful when a high-profile program or project would benefit from additional public debate or clarification. Letters also can be useful to correct or clarify inaccurate or incomplete information in earlier editorials, letters to the editors and news articles. Just because a letter is submitted does not guarantee that it will be published. Each newspaper provides direction (often available online) in submitting letters to the editor.

When Not to Use

Letters to the editor may or may not be published; therefore, they cannot be relied on to provide the only public discussion of a topic or to respond to all inaccurate or negative news or editorial opinions. WTD should not respond to every critical editorial or letter to the editor – and they should not criticize those opinions; instead, they should correct and clarify inaccurate and incomplete statements. Personal direct contacts with reporters or news editors (through telephone or e-mail) are preferable to letters to the editor when a correction of a news article is necessary.

Resources

Time: Low time commitment to King County since the sender prepares the letters.

Cost: The cost factor is low.

Staff: Staff time is low. Individuals writing a letter may need background information from County staff.

Definition

TV programming refers to the development, scheduling and broadcasting of WTD-specific productions on television stations for general audience viewing. TV programming includes segments of regular programs on local television stations (like KING TV's Evening Magazine) and segments or whole programs on King County's cable TV channel, King County Civic Television (CTV).

In addition to King County Council meetings and coverage of County Executive Ron Sims' weekly news briefings, CTV broadcasts special programs that explain County policies and programs. One on-going program, Environmental Focus, airs a variety of segments exploring the environment and health-related issues and may provide a niche for WTD programming.

How TV Programming Supports the Project

TV programming can be useful in airing a production that covers a WTD-related topic in greater detail. Generally, the finished piece is produced to run for a specific program length.

When to Use

A visual medium can be useful when you need to reach a large area with multiple jurisdictions. Often, people will take the time to watch TV rather the to read the local paper. Local television station programs may be willing to produce and broadcast segments tied to public events sponsored by WTD or to events in which WTD is participating. Internet options are increasing and may target a different viewing audience.

County-produced cable programs are most effective when part of a broader communications effort – at least one that promotes the program itself through news releases (to TV reporters), the Internet, project newsletters, e-mail distribution, fliers and other materials. Segments of County-produced programs can be formatted for the Internet and as public service announcements.

When Not to Use

It can be difficult to gauge the impact of TV programming on the audience. Do not expect a program segment produced by a local television station to cover a project completely, accurately or in a timely way. Most people do not regularly watch the local public access cable channels. Instead, TV viewers are used to the production quality and regularity of programs on the local television stations and TV networks.

Resources	**Time:** Time is needed to explore the options for programming, develop a production from concept through completion, schedule airtime and coordinate with TV stations. **Cost:** Besides the cost of the production itself, TV programming can be very expensive, especially on TV networks and local stations. Recent Cable TV options are on the rise and can provide inexpensive alternatives. **Staff:** Staff time is needed to explore the varying options for programming. As with all news media contacts, contacts with local television stations must be planned and made through the WTD media relations staff. County policies require staff to consult with King County's video production group before contracting with outside video consultants.

Definition

Call-in shows are special, issue-driven television and radio programs that are designed to allow a wide-spread audience the ability to ask questions to guests.

How Call-in Shows Support the Project

Local TV and radio stations schedule call-in shows on which division representatives may be interviewed. Cable access TV can provide opportunities to produce call-in shows accepting questions and comments through the phone, e-mail and Internet.

When to Use

Call-in shows should be used to facilitate a public dialogue about an issue, program or project with wide implications and regional significance. They may provide an up-beat opportunity to engage in dialogue about an issue, program or project with a large audience. They allow the listeners or viewers to take in information, react and provide a comment or question. WTD representatives (or the host) should have an opportunity to provide introductory or background information before dialogue begins. Cable access TV can provide production capability. County-produced cable programs are most effective when part of a broader communications effort – at least one that promotes the program itself through news releases (to TV reporters), the Internet, project newsletters, e-mail distributions, fliers and other materials.

When Not to Use

Call-in shows are not appropriate for smaller projects that reach or interest a small audience. Do not expect call-in shows to generate only positive, productive comments. Callers as well as hosts, especially on local stations, can make critical, “live” statements and opportunities to respond appropriately may be limited or non-existent. Also, most people do not regularly watch the local public access cable channels. Instead, TV viewers are used to the production quality and regularity of programs on local television stations and TV networks.

Resources

Time: Call-in shows require a lot of time from the creation of show to the production.

Cost: Call-in shows can vary in cost and are usually expensive.

Staff: Call-in shows are staff-intensive efforts. Most times, a station host or paid professional “talent” is needed to “MC” the event. In addition, County specialists need to be on hand to field the myriad questions that can come from large audiences. As with all news media contacts, contacts with local television and radio stations must be planned and made through WTD media relations staff. County policies require staff to consult with King County's video production group before contracting with outside consultants.

Definition

A media kit is an organized collection of information and materials intended to explain an issue, program or project to the media. Media kits are a handy way to supply reporters with supplemental information for news releases and include biographies, backgrounders, fact sheets, graphics, photos and frequently asked questions (FAQs). If your project is high profile and you anticipate TV and radio interest, canned video shorts and sound opportunities can be provided in the kit.

How Media Kits Support the Project

Media kits support the project by offering a package of project material that sends targeted key messages about a program or project. They provide an opportunity to control the messages given to the media in either written or produced form.

When to Use

Media kits are best when tailored to an individual event or program. A media kit can be provided to one local reporter or many reporters. Media kits can contain information developed for other audiences such as project printed materials and news releases. Remember that everything in a media kit could be published or broadcast as presented; accuracy and honesty are essential. Materials may also prompt additional questions from reporters.

When Not to Use

Media kits are not necessary for all projects. For small, less controversial projects a news release is usually appropriate. Remember that the distribution of media kits does not guarantee complete or accurate news coverage.

Resources

Time: Time can vary depending on whether or not new material needs to be developed. Time includes gathering and developing information.

Cost: Costs for sound opportunities and video need to be considered. Costs for folders and material production.

Staff: As with all news releases, use and production of media kits must be planned and coordinated through the WTD media relations staff. Staff time varies depending on what materials are provided in the media kit. Staff is needed to provide a contact to the media. Confer with the WTD media relations staff about an assigned spokesperson.

Advertisements

Advertisements inform a particular audience about King County and its projects and programs through placement in newspapers, magazines, radio, television, videos and other media. Advertisements are a way to ensure that a key message about a project or program is delivered to a mass audience or to a targeted group, such as a local community. Advertisements can be used to solicit interest or for event notification. They also can build an agency image, promote causes, provide consumer services and create community understanding.

Many people rely on mass media as their primary source of news, information and entertainment. These people may be stakeholders or the affected public of a project or program who will not attend a public meeting or read a project-specific newsletter. Advertisements can be a way to reach a larger audience about an event or issue. Incorporating media into the overall public involvement strategy increases the chance of reaching these people and perhaps stimulating them to participate.

Effective advertising follows a recognized, practical formula called “A.I.D.A.” that first grabs the **attention** of readers and viewers--by quickly highlighting a benefit to the readers/viewers, appealing to their self-interest in some way. In print, the headline and artwork can do that well. The words "you" and "your" can work wonders. So do commands (and their implied "you") and familiar, personal words like Edmonds, Kenmore, Kent, Ballard, "your community," "your neighborhood," “your opinions,” and “your concerns.”

An effective ad or commercial must then build on that reader/viewer’s **interest** -- by highlighting something that is new, important, improved, timely -- and needing reader involvement or participation. Smaller headlines and some related text work well for that, referring to coming events, public open houses, new facilities, new information, answers to "your" questions, key dates, environmental impacts and so on.

Then there is the body copy which must create **desire**. Using short, simple, familiar words and sentences, the text needs to talk directly to readers/viewers -- trying to convince them of the value of getting involved. At least in ads and commercials, too much information and too many words will not motivate readers to act; instead, they're likely to stop reading and watching; they’ll turn the page, look at another ad, turn the channel, start thinking about the weekend. Some background information may be necessary, but that information must help create desire to act; its purpose is not to educate, at least in effective ads and commercials.

And finally, effective ads and commercials must provide a call to **action** -- telling the readers specifically what to do to get the promised benefit: Attend this meeting, call this number, write to this address, visit this Web site, don’t put that down your toilet, dispose of household waste in this way.

The DNRP Public Affairs Office and WTD media relations staff work together to coordinate all news media contact. Please refer to the *Public Affairs Media Protocol* document available with the WTD media planner and in the Public Affairs Office for the specific details of news media relations for King County. Staff and consultants should coordinate advertising planning and contacts with the WTD media planner.

All King County printed materials must contain the legally required Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) statement. Please refer to King County Office of Civil Rights Enforcement, *Checklist for Accessible Printed Materials* for the appropriate statements and font sizes. The statements provide information and phone numbers if questions arise about special accommodations for printed materials and meeting accommodations. Advertisements announcing public events must include the meeting accommodations message; advertisements providing public contact information also must provide an alternative TTY number. Examples of the ADA notices also can be found on the templates provided in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains samples of advertising materials.

The tools contained in this section are:
- Paid Advertisements (printed public notification)
- Transit Advertisements
- Legal Notices for Public Hearings
- Radio and TV Commercials
- Promotional Items

Definition

Paid advertising is usually a designed ad that states exactly the information you want to communicate, such as a meeting announcement or explanation of a project. It is placed during the time it will make the most impact. Newspapers or magazines can usually help to place an ad where it is most likely to get noticed by the target audience.

How Transit Advertisements Support the Project

Unlike news releases, which are not guaranteed to get news coverage of a meeting or other announcement, a paid advertisement ensures coverage and exposure. WTD will often have a say in where its advertisement is placed.

When to Use

Use this tool to publicize a public meeting, target audiences that cannot be reached in other ways, or to reinforce other communications tools. Use display ads to comply with regulatory requirements for public notification and consider whether publication in a large paper of record is required. A display ad can also be placed at the same time as a required legal notice to reinforce the information in a more visible place. For a smaller project, a paid ad in a smaller weekly paper can be a low-cost way to reach a targeted audience.

When Not to Use

Do not consider using a paid ad in a large daily paper if you are trying to reach a small community or if you have a tight budget. Careful evaluation of a paper's circulation and readership as compared with the target audience may determine that a paid ad should not be used.

Resources

Time: Paid advertising can be time consuming to develop and costly, depending on the level of detail and size of the ad. Media outlets generally work with standard widths to fit into a specific column layout. One ad can be designed for placement in various newspapers, if necessary, but will need to be sized according to width requirements of each outlet. Deadlines for advertising should be considered for scheduling purposes, especially in weekly or monthly publications where advertising needs to be laid out well in advance.

Cost: Generally, weekly newspapers are less costly than daily newspapers. Remember to consider graphic and staff writer costs.

Staff: Staff time is needed to write the copy, design the ad and coordinate the placement.

Definition

Transit advertisements are paid advertising on buses. Transit advertisements can raise awareness on a specific issue using short, concise and pointed key messages or tag lines. Careful consideration should be given to ensure that transit advertisements are an appropriate component of an overall public involvement plan.

How Transit Advertisements Support the Project

Transit advertisements can provide an instant, targeted reinforcement of a specific idea or a desired change of behavior. They can be placed either inside or outside of the vehicle and should be designed to convey one clear message using either words (a tag line) and/or a visual (photographs, graphics, etc.). The placement of the advertisement will dictate the audience (which part of the bus). Transit advertisements are a great complement to an overall promotional or educational campaign in a public involvement plan.

When to Use

Transit ads should be used to reach a large audience with one clear and simple message. Transit ads can be targeted to large geographic areas, such as the Eastside, south King County, north King County and Seattle.

When Not to Use

Transit ads should not be used to convey complex messages or to target small audiences. Buses are used on varying routes and ads cannot be targeted to reach a specific neighborhood.

Resources

Time: Consider the time to design, produce and coordinate advertisement placement. Also, Metro Transit often has a waiting list for placing ads.

Cost: WTD can receive transit advertisement discounts, however professional graphic design support will be required.

Staff: Staff time needed to produce and place the advertisements can be considerable. King County Metro's transit marketing staff can provide useful advice.

Definition

A legal notice is a paid written notice that is placed in the legal notice column of the classified ad section of a newspaper to comply with legal requirements. Like a paid advertisement, a legal notice ensures that exact information gets exposure. The difference is that the placement of legal notices is to comply with certain required laws or regulations. In addition, right-of-way and permitting staff, or environmental planning staff, are the lead for placement of legal notices (not community relations staff). Community relations staff may be asked to support placement of a notice.

How Legal Notices for Public Hearings Support the Project

A legal notice complies with regulatory requirements. It is usually straightforward and contains only written text. It may contain the County logo, but generally contains no other graphics. Legal notices are generally placed in a specific area of a newspaper of record so people know where to look for them.

When to Use

Use the legal notice to comply with regulatory requirements. An affidavit and tear sheet are requested from the newspaper for WTD records.

When Not to Use

If a legal notice is not required, use a display ad instead. Do not depend on legal notices to reach your target audience. Placement of legal notices is limited and inflexible. The visibility of legal notices is low, because they are normally placed in small text in the classifieds, along with many other notices.

Resources

Time: Most legal notices that meet a specific requirement will have a template. There are many different requirements for the verbiage within a legal notice. Formatting notices to meet the requirements of different outlets can add time. Be aware of any deadlines for the outlets in which the notice is scheduled to run and plan accordingly.

Cost: Costs differ depending on the size of the newspaper, but are generally low in comparison with paid advertising.

Staff: The staff time needed to prepare for legal notices is minimal.

Definition

Radio and TV commercials should consist of one clear, key message and be part of a larger promotional or educational campaign. The commercials should be professionally produced.

How Radio and TV Commercials Support the Project

Radio and TV spots can be a good complement to an overall promotional or educational campaign. The commercial enforces a targeted tag line or key message. The purpose of the commercial needs to be carefully considered when producing a radio or TV spot. The targeted demographics of the radio and TV stations need to be considered when choosing the station to air the commercial.

When to Use

Unlike news releases, in which news coverage of a meeting or other announcement is not guaranteed, a commercial ensures coverage and exposure. It is possibly the quickest and surest way to reach a large audience simultaneously. In addition, WTD has a say in when the spot will air. Use this tool with an overall promotion or education campaign when reaching out to a large audience with a specific key message. Use broadcast advertising to target audiences that cannot be reached in other ways.

When Not to Use

Do not use radio and TV advertising if a project affects only a small community or is on a tight budget for time and money.

Resources

Time: Radio and TV advertising can be costly and time consuming to develop. Radio and TV stations generally work with standard time slots to fit into a specific programming schedule.

Cost: The costs can be considerable and should be completely researched before attempting to produce a commercial. Also, the audience reached by time slots varies, and different time slots will reach different audiences. Plan this carefully.

Staff: It is important that a radio or TV commercial is professionally produced. County staff time to coordinate the production and placement of the spots needs to be considered.

Promotional Items

Definition

Promotional items carry an agency's name and message in a personal way. Promotional items have a unique presentation and high repetitive value. They have a "gift" quality and have a relatively long life. There are many promotional items available for projects. Items that are produced for King County include pencils, cloth bags and temporary tattoos. Before deciding on promotional items, WTD management and DNRP public affairs need to be consulted.

How Promotional Items Support the Project

Promotional items can reinforce a program or project. They can be designed to reach specific audiences for specific events like fairs and festivals. They can be useful objects such as bags, bookmarks, binders, pencils and pens. They can be educational interactive games to reinforce change-of-behavior messages. Promotional items should convey one clear message using either words (a tag line or slogan, phone number or Web address) and/or a visual (photographs, graphics, etc.).

When to Use

Promotional items are best used as a complement to an overall promotional or education campaign for a program or project.

When Not to Use

Promotional items are not always appropriate. The public is often critical of government spending on promotional items. Before deciding to use a promotional item, consider the overall value to the project. Smaller public involvement efforts, for example, rarely need the investment of a promotional item to communicate about the project. Promotional items can be subject to fads. The message can be too short and its effectiveness difficult to measure.

Resources

Time: Many companies carry promotional items that are relatively easy to order and customize. Time will be needed to ensure the items are received before the date needed.

Cost: Some promotional items may have relatively high unit costs.

Staff: The important investment of staff time is in the development of the key message. A moderate amount of staff time is required to order a promotional item.

Public Meetings

Public meeting is an umbrella term for a number of different kinds of meetings, workshops and events. Meetings are a face-to-face way to involve or inform those interested in a project or program. The format of meetings can be formal, informal, informational, participatory or a combination of those. The type of meeting used depends on the public involvement needs of the project. Meetings are a good way to exchange information with a wide representation of community residents. Meetings should be tailored to the target audience, the corridor or neighborhood in which the project takes place, the types of stakeholder or affected public and, in some cases, existing legal requirements.

Knowing the purpose and desired outcome of a public meeting will help determine its format. If the goal is to obtain input or feedback on a specific issue or project element, one of the more interactive types of meetings, like a design charette or a focus group, may be appropriate. However, if the goal is simply to share information with the public, an open house might be better suited. It is also important to think about what kind of follow-up action will result from the meeting. Is the comment gathered at a public meeting a legal requirement in the decision making? Will the County be required to respond to individual comments? Answering these kinds of questions will determine the level of documentation necessary at the meeting.

Certain environmental and planning processes (like National Environmental Policy Act and State Environmental Policy Act) require formal public hearings facilitated by a hearing officer and documented by a court reporter. In the context of these guidelines, the term "public hearing" refers specifically to this type of legally necessary public meeting. However, the elements of a public hearing, like employing professional facilitators and note takers, may be successfully applied to any kind of gathering or workshop.

If law requires a public hearing, other agencies and entities may be involved in planning and executing it. For example, a public hearing may be required to obtain a permit or approval from a local jurisdiction. The Hearing Examiner meeting is coordinated by WTD's right-of-way and permitting staff since it is permit-related. In that case, the local jurisdiction may be responsible for coordinating the meeting, setting the agenda and staffing the event, working closely with WTD's right-of-way and permitting staff. Community relations planners may not need to participate.

In other instances, for example under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a federal agency must take the role of lead agency. The County may be responsible for coordinating and staffing a hearing according to NEPA regulations. WTD's environmental planners can provide guidance in complying with regulations.

A meeting is a way to provide timely opportunities for participation, but a meeting is only as effective as its participants. When planning a meeting, be sure to consider who should attend, what the barriers to attendance might be (conflicts with other events, lack of interest, lack of awareness of the meeting or the project, etc.) and target the meeting planning to overcome those barriers.

Combining informational materials with meetings is a good way to maximize the effectiveness of the meeting. Public meetings, when supported by informational materials, such as fliers, fact sheets, newsletters and displays, and media efforts, such as press releases and paid advertising, are effective tools to increase project awareness, create relationships with stakeholders and affected public and promote exchange of information and ideas.

All public meetings must be held in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible sites. Additionally, ADA notices must be present on all written material about the public meeting, and provide a contact person if special accommodations at the meeting are desired.

The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains meeting accessibility guidelines, checklists, sample meeting materials and related items.

Tools contained in this section are organized by public meeting format and include:

- Open Houses
- Public Workshops
- Public Hearings
- Traveling Exhibits
- Focus Groups
- Small Group Discusions
- Design Charettes

Definition

Open houses are informal meetings with no formal agenda or presentations. They are ideal for providing information and receiving input in a casual setting by fostering one-on-one conversation with knowledgeable staff. An open house consists of several stations that provide information on different aspects of the program or project. An open house is especially useful when a project or program has a lot of technical details to explain. Sometimes it is also necessary to provide basic background information on wastewater to allow the public to fully understand a project or program.

How Open Houses Support the Project

The open house format is most useful in allowing people to drop in at any point during the meeting and learn about the project. Open houses are ideal if a large number of people are expected and if the project is controversial.

They can be as brief as one hour and as long as six hours, depending if they are offered in combination with a public workshop, meeting or hearing. Comment forms should be offered at specific stations around the room, depending on anticipated attendance.

When to Use

Use an open house to provide an opportunity for community dialogue with project staff, foster one-on-one communications and provide a “face” to the agency that will build credibility. Often, an open house format is a good way to start off a public meeting or hearing by allowing the attendees to get up-to-speed regarding the project by one-on-one discussions with knowledgeable staff in a less formal setting

When Not to Use

When trying to reach a specific neighborhood or community, the open house format may not be the best technique to use because attendance is not assured. When presenting a detailed proposal that needs dedicated time to explain, a more formal public meeting may be best.

Resources

Time: Notification is an important step and is usually in the form of a project newsletter, flier, paid advertisement in the local newspapers, news release, poster, mailing list or e-mail list. In addition, time is required to reserve meeting space, create meetings materials and displays, and set up, staff and take down the event.

Cost: The cost is dependent on the price of room rental, printed materials used at the open house and for notification of the open house, staff and displays.

Staff: The open house format is staff intensive. Adequate staff is needed to ensure that attendees' questions can be answered. Also, remember to provide a sign-in station and ample area for large groups to move through the open house.

Definition

Public workshops are informal, yet structured and are used early in the project or program process to set the stage for a project and work through key issues. They usually involve targeted, smaller groups that are encouraged to work together to solve specific issues. They can be used mid-process to showcase and refine specific aspects of the project, resolve conflicts and work toward consensus.

How Public Workshops Support the Project

They can be used to kick off a planning process or to work through key issues by allowing the workshop participants to be part of project alternative development, screening and ranking. The format allows stakeholders to be part of the process in an interactive venue.

When to Use

These workshops are most helpful when a specific group is asked to work together to be part of a solution. Smaller groups tend to work together more intensely. These are helpful when attempting to gain participants' interest. Using a facilitator should be considered.

When Not to Use

Workshops should not be used after decisions have been made or if the results will not be seriously considered in a decision-making process.

Resources

Time: Notification is an important step and is usually in the form of a project newsletter, flier, paid advertisement in the local newspapers, news release, mailing list or e-mail list. A targeted audience can be invited by invitation.

Cost: The cost is dependent on the price of the room, printed materials, notification, staff and displays. Professional facilitation costs should also be considered.

Staff: Preparation and planning are important steps when using the public workshop format, and staff time must be dedicated to that effort. It is important to identify the workshop purpose, what information is needed and why, and what will be done with the information once it is collected. Often times, it is necessary to break a larger (20-49 person) group down into smaller (4-7 person) groups, in order to maximize the amount of time for each person to be involved. That may require additional staff to manage and facilitate the work of the small groups.

Definition

Public hearings are formal public gatherings that are required by federal and/or state regulations, such as National Environmental Policy Act, State Environmental Policy Act and Superfund. They are also required in certain planning processes. A public hearing gathers formal testimony on an issue or project from all interested parties. Public hearings are open to anyone and therefore, must be held in locations that are accessible to individuals with disabilities and reachable by public transportation. They often require an official hearing officer or facilitator to be present. Individuals may be asked to sign up in advance to provide comments, and the amount of time allocated per person may be limited to a specified time period (e.g., five minutes). Public hearings have specific requirements for public notification. See the Legal Notices for Public Hearings in the advertisements group of tools.

A key feature of a public hearing is that the proceedings must be formally recorded, either by a voice or video recorder or court reporter. At the end of a public involvement process, comments from all public hearings, as well as written input from citizens, form the public record that will guide agency decision-making.

How Public Hearings Support the Project

Public hearings comply with regulatory requirements and provide a forum for receiving public comments on a proposal from a wide representation of community residents. They are held prior to a key decision point and the input they gather is a required element in many decision-making processes. While more frequent and less formal opportunities for community input are essential in that they offer the opportunity for early and continuing involvement in a project, public hearings allow the public to hear each other's perspectives. They are fair in that all speakers are limited to the same amount of time and all comments are recorded verbatim for the public record. These beneficial aspects of a public hearing can be applied to more informal meetings and open houses.

When to Use

A public hearing should be used when needed to fulfill regulatory requirements. A hearing is often scheduled during a formal public comment period on a project, allowing enough time for the public to review a document and prepare comments before the hearing, and leaving enough time for follow-up comments to be submitted after the hearing. At the end of this process, all comments and agency responses are available for review and become part of the public record. Always plan to listen to citizen ideas and concerns, and be prepared to demonstrate how those concerns and ideas will be included in the decision-making or planning process.

When Not to Use	A public hearing is not the time to bring new information or data to the public. A public hearing is not interactive and provides an insufficient level of public involvement when held at the end of a process. Public hearings are not designed to address or ease community doubts/concerns about a project or the agency. A very small percentage of the public attends public hearings, which is why other forms of public involvement are suggested unless a hearing is required by regulations.
Resources	Staffing the hearing with a sufficient number of knowledgeable people is a consideration. Depending on the structure of the hearing, or if an open house precedes it, displays, sketch overlays, notepads or comments sheets are needed to provide a full explanation to community residents. A court reporter must also be hired to prepare an official record. **Time:** Notification is an important step and is usually in the form of a project newsletter, flier, paid advertisement in the local newspapers, news release, mailing list or e-mail list. **Cost:** A budget will need to be determined for production of public notices of the hearings and placement into general circulation newspapers with the time, date, and place of the hearing. Costs include the price of room rental and meeting materials and displays. If transcripts are to be provided, then the cost of a court reporter must be included in the budget. **Staff:** There are generally policy and legal requirements for the hearing that include notification type and times, the need for additional staff, including a hearing examiner or facilitator, and a court reporter to provide a complete transcript of the proceedings.

Definition

This is an event used to interest community members in specific projects or programs. Examples of potential venues include County and community fairs, malls or retail spaces, libraries and field offices. A traveling exhibit is a display used to deliver a theme and key messages about a project or program. Often large exhibits are designed with bold graphics or photos that deliver visual key messages.

How Traveling Exhibits Support the Project

This tool presents information to the public and encourages participants to view exhibits, ask questions, consider information and give comments. It creates interest in a project and can be creative and interactive. It can keep people informed, interested and up-to-date.

When to Use

Use this tool to emphasize specifics about a subject. It is helpful as an informal, short-term event held in a central location where many people pass by (shopping mall or store). Exhibits can be designed to be independent of staff. However, staff is an important part of key message delivery and encourages discussions with the public.

When Not to Use

Do not use this as a “stand alone” technique. This type of tool does not usually represent all interests groups. It does not develop public consensus on a project.

Resources

Time: Consider the venue and overall time commitment, such as the length of the fair or venue opportunity.

Cost: The tool focuses on visual elements such as exhibits, videos, maps or models that can be expensive and time consuming to produce.

Staff: Once prepared, exhibits can be used again in other locations or situations. Knowledgeable and personable staff must be dedicated to staffing exhibits.

Definition

Focus groups are a tool to help gauge public opinion in the early stages of a project – usually in the planning and sometimes in the design phase. Generally ranging from 6-12 participants, the group must be carefully assembled to include a representative sample of the impacted/affected population. A professionally trained moderator works through a script designed to elicit responses and these reactions are then used to predict community opinion or to develop solutions.

There are six main elements to conducting a formal focus group: developing recruitment screeners, recruiting participants, developing a moderator's script, moderating the focus group, analyzing the data and writing the focus group report. Focus groups are more formalized and rigorous than other small group meetings. They often take place in a lab where the proceedings can be viewed through one-way glass and videotaped. Focus groups require consultant assistance unless staff has statistical and/or behavioral science backgrounds.

How a Focus Group Supports the Project

Identifying the needs, concerns, values and expectations of focus group participants is especially helpful as a way to get an early sense of public opinion and reaction to a project. Focus groups provide important information that factor into plans; and can inform the design of a public involvement program. They are also helpful in developing key messages and media plans.

When to Use

Focus groups are most helpful during the planning phase of a project. The main benefit of a focus group is that participants can hear and react to each other's comments. This synergy may reveal insights that might not arise in a stakeholder interview or survey.

When Not to Use

Focus groups are not as useful during implementation phases, like construction and operations. Focus groups should not be considered after key decisions have already been made.

Resources

Time: After developing a recruitment screener, budget enough time to recruit participants. Remember recruiting will often need to be conducted during evening and weekend hours and confirmation calls should be made the day prior to the focus group. Besides time for the recruiting phase someone must arrange facilities and equipment, staff the event (moderator/AV tech), analyze the data and write a report.

Cost: Focus groups should be professionally moderated. To run a series of focus groups the cost may be high. Hiring a research firm will include costs such as facility, participant honorariums, refreshments and writing a report.

Staff: Recruiter(s), moderator, AV tech, data analyst and report author are recommended for a successful focus group.

Definition

This is a tool to help gauge public opinion about a project or program during the planning or design phase or to inform affected residents of project progress during construction. Participants of small group discussions are given information about a subject in an informal setting, and are asked to provide their opinions and reactions. Those opinions are used to predict community response and to help develop plans and solutions to problems.

How Small Group Discussions Support the Project

Identifying the needs, concerns, values and expectations of small group participants is especially helpful as a way to get an early sense of public opinion and reaction to a project. Small groups also help gauge community satisfaction with and tolerance of construction projects and their impacts. They provide important information to factor into plans; and can provide excellent input into designing and evolving an ongoing public involvement program for the life of the project.

When to Use

Small groups are helpful to predict public opinion and reaction to a project during the planning or design phase. Once project construction is underway, small groups serve the purpose of allowing personalized information exchange between the County and residents whose lives are most impacted. Small group discussions can take many forms ranging from a neighborhood get-together in a private home to a more formal meeting that looks and feels more like a focus group. No matter when a small group discussion is held, the input can be used to update and improve upon the public involvement plan.

When Not to Use

Small group discussions should be part of a wider public involvement plan. Even if the area affected by a project is small, they should not be used alone, but rather in combination with effective informational materials, media coverage, etc.

Resources

Time: Each small group meeting needs preparation time for designing the meeting format and agenda and preparing needed materials. A small group meeting usually takes about two hours.

Cost: Meeting space, invitations, refreshments and preparation of informational materials need to be considered when developing a budget.

Staff: If managed internally, staff time will be required to prepare for the meetings, including scripting questions and outlining information for the small group members. Staff time also will be needed to compile the results.

Definition

A design charette is a meeting that is used to solicit creative input on a project or issue in an interactive, hands-on setting. Originally an architectural forum, a design charette involves stakeholders in developing policies, design concepts or alternatives. Charettes are heavily facilitated meetings that are used to resolve a problem or issue within a specific time period by asking participants to “roll up their sleeves” and work together intensely to reach a resolution.

How Charettes Support the Project

A design charette is problem-oriented and produces visible results and enlarges the degree of public involvement. It generates alternative solutions to problems. Charettes can sharpen agency understanding of the perspectives of interest groups and they can be a barometer of the potential for consensus and potentially competing demands.

When to Use

Charettes are an excellent tool for stimulating stakeholder involvement, generating ideas or solutions to problems, and developing a common understanding of the problem and potential solutions. They can be used to obtain and document the public’s opinion on design or art options.

When Not to Use

Do not use a charette without the appropriate expertise and resources available. For example, staff for a charette on a new treatment plant should include engineers, environmental planners, biologists and architects. Charettes should be used early in the decision-making process.

Resources

Time: Notification is an important step and is usually in the form of a project newsletter, flier, paid advertisement in the local newspapers, news release, mailing list and e-mail list.

Cost: The cost is dependent on the cost of the room, printed materials, notification of the charette, staff and displays.

Staff: Preparation and planning are important steps when using a design charette. Staff time must be dedicated to identify the meeting purpose, determine what information is needed and why, and decide what to do with the information once it is collected. Often times, it is necessary to break a larger (20-49) person group down into smaller (4-7 person) groups, in order to maximize the amount of time each person is involved, and this requires additional staff. A charette requires a facilitator or leader as well as staff who understand the problem, can explain the data, and have worked with applicable policies.

Contact Information and Hotlines

Contact information and hotlines provide a means of receiving information from and delivering information to the affected public and stakeholders in their homes and offices on their own schedules. These tools are a way to provide basic information about a project. They are easy to use for informing a wide range of individuals about a project or planning process and for allowing the affected public and stakeholders to ask questions or voice opinions.

Broadly publicizing contact information and hotlines is the key to making sure these are effective tools for a project. Hotlines address specific, recurring issues or questions. Calls received on a hotline are an indicator of the opinions within a community, rather than a random sample of the public. If a community relations planner receives several questions on a certain subject area, he or she can adjust the outreach activities to improve the general understanding of those issues.

Human contact, either for a staffed information line or when returning hotline queries, is vitally important and should be a staple of public involvement, even when a planner utilizes other means of reaching people. Hotlines are a low-tech, low-cost method of enhancing the County's ability to communicate quickly with the public on a project. They show a desire to communicate with the affected public and stakeholders. Special training is not involved. Any community resident can use the hotline to reach the right staff person for information or to answer specific questions.

When a project has the potential for media attention, it is important to alert the WTD media planner to insure that this audience will be responded to appropriately and with correct messages and information. Procedures are in place to contact appropriate County staff in the event of an emergency.

Contact information (name, address, phone, fax) is always listed on project fliers.

The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains information on how to obtain pagers and establish project contact lines. A pager/hotline log template and procedure for pager set up are also available.

The tools contained in this section are:

- Construction Hotlines
- Central Information Contact (Liaison)
- Project Information Contact

Definition

A construction hotline is an established, well-publicized telephone number that receives inquiries from the general public about a specific construction project. It operates – at a minimum – during business hours. Hotlines are generally set up as a voicemail line with a recorded, outgoing message that identifies the project. An incoming message line allows citizens to leave their name, address, phone number and concern. Generally, a pager system will alert a staff person to the message and the individual will respond immediately.

How Construction Hotlines Support the Project

Hotlines are an inexpensive and easy-to-use tool for allowing the public to ask questions or express concerns about a project. Logging the information received through the hotlines provides a valuable record of events, and tracks themes and contact information throughout the life of the project. It is a good idea to post on all promotional materials the amount of time it will take a County representative to respond to hotline calls. This lets callers know when to expect a reply to their concerns. When a project is nearing close out, begin to let the public know when the hotline will no longer be available. Provide a staff contact and phone number once the hotline is shut off.

When to Use

Hotlines are particularly useful for construction projects, which may generate new community impacts or concerns as work progresses. Many construction projects involve early morning or evening work, and hotlines allow citizens to express concerns and obtain information after hours. Thus, many hotlines are staffed on a 24-hour basis. A well-publicized hotline that is frequently checked and regularly responded to is an effective way to track citizen concerns and complaints, and promptly address them.

When Not to Use

Hotlines are less useful if they are not linked to pagers and there is no mechanism in place to respond to concerns in a timely fashion.

Resources

Time: Hotlines require commitment to and preparedness for prompt and accurate responses – up to 24/7, if required by the project. Staff time must also be committed to logging information, if necessary. The interface to set up this tool is minimal. King County has an internal department that handles hotlines and pagers. The outgoing message can be developed easily and implemented quickly.

Cost: Cost to establish and maintain a pager/hotline is nominal. Using King County resources, the cost is less than $15 a month.

Staff: Hotlines need the support of a community relations planner or another contact person familiar with the project and able to respond to the public around the clock, if needed. An agreed-upon procedure should be in place that identifies how a planner should respond to calls. Establishing a hotline log should also be considered a required part of this tool. Several staff members are normally briefed on the project and hotline procedures so a backup staff person is always available.

Definition

The central information contact is a designated person(s) identified as the official liaison(s) for the affected public and stakeholders of a project.

How a Central Information Contact Supports the Project

The liaison must convey a message of "accessibility" to the affected public and to stakeholders. He or she should be familiar with the project and able deal directly with people who call a hotline. Identifying a central information contact controls the flow of information by limiting the number of people responding to queries and it assures consistent messages are being delivered about the project. A project manager can track how and if queries are handled and responded to properly and make adjustments as necessary.

When to Use

Using a central information contact is helpful on large, complex construction projects where responses to concerns and queries should be handled promptly and with consistent information. He or she can control information flow for a large project and track how concerns are being responded to overall. Physically large project areas and dense neighborhoods benefit from having an identified number of people who are familiar with the project and can provide accurate, consistent information throughout the life of the project. To meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, this person is to be listed as the general contact person. For alternate formats of information on fliers and meeting notices, a name, address, phone, fax and e-mail should be supplied.

When Not to Use

This tool is not as effective or helpful if there is not a system set up to record the activities of the liaison (i.e. a log) to make compiling and tracking concerns easier for the project manager. Do not select a liaison who does not have time to update the recorded messages with the most current information and keep contact records current.

Resources

Time: The liaison must be committed to and prepared for prompt and accurate responses – up to 24/7 if required by the project. He or she must also be committed to logging information.

Cost: Staff or consultant time dedicated to when they are actually responding to a call. Pagers are relatively low cost.

Staff: A County person or consultant will be listed on fliers.

Definition

This is the local source of information (i.e., has a local phone number) for a project. A project information line is either staffed during business hours (with voicemail as a backup) or is a place to leave a message/opinion about a project. An identified staff person is dedicated to answering questions that come into this line and for providing and updating a timely, scripted message. A mechanism for leaving a message is generally available after hours. Unlike a construction hotline, personal response to a project information line is not offered outside of business hours.

How Information Lines Support the Project

This tool conveys a message of "accessibility" to the affected public and to stakeholders by assigning a staff person to answer calls as they come in, at least during business hours (with voicemail as a back up). Someone familiar with the project will deal directly with people who call. The person who answers the call is well versed in the specifics of the project and able to answer follow-up questions. Staff provide real time responses to individuals. The person staffing this information line should be familiar with the procedures in place for working with the media and know how those calls are handled.

When to Use

This tool is helpful on complicated and/or controversial projects. It is beneficial when callers can make immediate human contact – especially if they are upset about an issue. The information to reach this person must be included on all promotional materials.

When Not to Use

This tool is not helpful when a staff person is not dedicated to answering calls that come in to the number.

Resources

Time: Staff only needs to dedicate time when they are actually on the telephone, with some additional time needed for documentation and other administrative tasks.

Cost: Cost varies, depending on the complexity of the system in use. King County has a successful pager system that is very low cost.

Staff: King County staff person.

Outreach to Individuals and Groups

Outreach to individuals and groups can target a broad array of groups of interested citizens. Outreach efforts can be geared toward groups already in existence, such as neighborhood associations, business groups or environmental organizations. Efforts can also be directed at agency-sponsored citizen advisory committees or boards dedicated to a specific issue or program area. Outreach efforts may even be aimed at individual citizens, otherwise unrelated, who have a high interest in a project or plan or at other government agencies.

Communicating with stakeholders or individuals is an essential part of a successful public involvement strategy. Community members who participate in special interest groups bring new ideas, new points-of-view and a community perspective directly into the decision-making process. The tools contained in this section reach out to stakeholders and the general public either through educational tools, such as videos and tours, or through tools that take County staff out to community functions and meetings. Another way to encourage community participation is through tools that bring stakeholders together in facilitated gatherings to come to a deeper understanding of issues, share perspectives, and work towards common ground and consensus about complex issues.

Educational outreach is often needed to build support or understanding for ongoing programs or initiatives. Many of the tools in this section are useful for developing an educational program that may be targeted at school-aged children, college students, or a specific neighborhood near a major wastewater facility.

There are four constituent groups that require special attention when developing outreach strategies. Those groups are: tribes, component agencies (such as local utility districts), government agencies, and elected officials.

As with all the tools in Section 5, none of these tools should be relied on solely in a public involvement strategy. When a public involvement strategy includes outreach to stakeholders, and incorporates opportunities for two-way exchange of ideas and concerns, it is much more likely to lead to a successful project.

The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains examples of outreach tools, how to set up a tour, and list of videos.

Tools contained in this section are:

- Briefings
- Interviews
- Advisory Committees and Task Forces
- Speakers' Bureaus
- Tours
- Videos

Definition

A briefing is a project or program summary provided to a group or individual who has been identified as being highly affected by the anticipated plan or action. A briefing provides specific, targeted information. They are typically delivered by senior project staff, who are able to answer most questions, to the extent possible, at the time of the briefing. Briefings are offered at key decision or action points in a program or project.

How Briefings Support the Project

Briefings are useful for ensuring that decision makers, opinion leaders or vocal supporters and opponents are given current and accurate information about the plan or project. They can help build credibility for the project and avoid the build-up of resentment or even opposition. The key to successful briefings is to provide accurate information in a timely manner, and allow time in the briefing for questions and dialogue about the material presented.

If possible, briefing should leverage the regularly planned meetings of existing community groups. For instance, if a neighborhood community council holds its annual meeting during a time that coincides with important project activity or decision-points, it is important to take advantage of the timing and brief that community council.

When to Use

Use briefings when a program or project is complicated, potentially controversial or occurs in a politically sensitive area. Briefings are a great tool to use to bring affected interests in the political arena up to date on a project or plan, such as when a project will cross jurisdictional boundaries. Additionally, consider using briefings as a tool to avoid misperceptions or misunderstanding of the mission, problems to be solved or opportunities to be gained.

When Not to Use

Do not use briefings if knowledgeable and empowered staff is not available to be present. Sending a junior staff person out who has incomplete knowledge about the briefing topic is a disservice to the target audience and to the junior staff. Do not use a briefing in place of a public meeting or other information-sharing tool; rather, use it to augment these tools so as to get more specific information out to those who are highly interested or highly affected.

Resources

Time: Advance time may be needed to reserve space on a group's meeting agenda – up to four to six weeks in advance for some groups or political bodies, such as city councils, etc.

Additionally, time must be spent preparing briefing materials, including presentation materials, handouts, etc.

Cost: Briefings are a low-cost method of reaching out to key stakeholders or highly affected publics. The cost of presentation materials such as mounted display boards or renderings should be factored into a budget.

Staff: Senior project or program staff must be made available to offer technical information at briefings. Additionally, staff must be available to prepare briefing materials.

Definition

Interviews are one-on-one meetings with stakeholders or potential stakeholders to gain information on public concerns and perspectives for developing or refining public involvement and consensus-building programs. Typically, a standard list of open-ended (versus yes-or-no) questions is developed in advance. Interviews differ from casual, information-gathering conversations with stakeholders in that the discussion is guided and the questions are standardized from person to person. The content of an interview is always recorded and may be distributed to interested members of a project team.

How Interviews Support the Project

Interviews can provide the opportunity to get an understanding of public concerns and issues. They can also provide the opportunity to learn how best to communicate with the public. Interviews can also be used to evaluate potential citizen members of an advisory board or to identify potential supporters or opponents.

Interview summaries are kept as part of the record of public involvement on a project. If an interview participant would like his or her comments kept confidential, remarks can be recorded, but not attributed to the individual. Check first with King County's legal department on all questions of confidentiality.

When to Use

Use interviews when it is suspected there will be issues and concerns about a project or program that should be addressed through the public involvement program. Interviews should be considered for longer duration projects, potentially controversial or complex projects or programs, or when significant input into the decision-making process is needed. In some cases, the County might hire a consultant to get an independent view of a situation. If the objective is exploratory, to get to know the issues and community, the County staff should take the lead.

When Not to Use

Do not use interviews as a way to "convince" a stakeholder or member of the public that a plan or program is acceptable or unchangeable. Interviews should only be used as a tool for gaining information.

Resources

Time: Allow enough time to align with targeted interests' schedules. That time may be outside of regular working hours, in the evenings or on weekends.

Cost: Interviews are relatively cost-free except for staff time, unless a neutral party is hired to conduct the interviews.

Staff: Staff used to conduct the interviews must have flexible schedules in order to accommodate interviewees' schedules. Also, staff members with good interpersonal skills must be selected as interviewers.

Definition

An advisory committee is a group of representative stakeholders assembled to provide public input to the planning process. Typically, advisory committee membership is drawn from highly interested or impacted stakeholders or members of the general public. Every effort should be made to include on advisory committees "key influentials" that represent diverse perspectives. Members of an advisory committee should be committed to communicating with their constituencies, so as to ably represent their interests and to disseminate the work of the committee. An advisory committee must have a clear work plan, including clear goals and objectives, and an evaluation mechanism to determine its overall effectiveness.

Advisory committee members must be clear about their roles, commitment they are making, and how their input will be documented and used. They must also understand whether the decision they are trying to reach must be brought about by consensus or majority. Select members who will represent the interests of a variety of agencies, organizations and groups rather than simply their individual points of view. This kind of diversity gives credibility to the decisions reached by the committee. A staff member (or team of staff) is assigned to support an advisory committee, providing information and administrative support, and responding to committee member requests.

A task force is also formed to provide input, but the goal is more specific. Task forces are formed to develop a specific product, provide information to project staff or recommend a course of action. A technical review or peer review group is not considered a community relations tool. Technical and scientific staff may use them to validate findings or conclusions.

How Advisory Committees and Task Forces Support the Project

An advisory committee or task force can provide detailed analyses for project issues. Participants can gain an understanding of other perspectives, leading towards compromise or consensus. This can be invaluable in building community consent for a plan or project.

When to Use

Consider using an advisory committee or task force when the project or plan has the potential to be complex or controversial, or when inter-jurisdictional or interdisciplinary issues are likely to arise (i.e. environmental concerns, political concerns, etc.) However, an advisory committee may not achieve consensus, and even if they do, the general public may not embrace the committee's recommendations. Consult with senior WTD management before convening an advisory committee or task force.

When Not to Use

Do not consider using an advisory committee or task force if there is not dedicated staff and staff time available to support the committee. An advisory committee is not recommended for projects that are short in duration or simple in scope. Do not use an advisory committee as a "rubber stamp" group in order to demonstrate community acceptance of a project or plan. Do not use an advisory committee as the only public participation tool. Do not consider convening an advisory committee or task force without consulting with senior WTD management.

Resources

Time: Advisory committees and task forces require considerable time for preparation and distribution of informational materials, agenda development, meeting design, and meeting support. Additionally, time is required to respond to committee members' calls and queries regarding the subject matter, as well as to provide additional technical resources to the committee, as needed.

Cost: Consider cost if third party facilitation and/or support is used.

Staff: Advisory committees are very staff-intensive. A staff member (or team) must be designated and time must be dedicated to support the committee. Additional staff time may be required to present technical information as requested by committee members to support their processes. In most cases a professional facilitator may be needed.

Definition

Speakers' bureaus are groups of trained representatives who can speak about a process or program. They are a "one-stop" resource for community members or organizations that want to provide information to their groups or members. Bureau members meet with public and private organizations and groups on behalf of a project, program or planning activity. Members of a speakers' bureau provide information about planning or project activities, listen to people's concerns, answer questions and seek continued participation and input from the public. Speakers' bureaus can be educational (providing current information about programs and plans) or they can be issues-oriented (eliciting broader feedback to impending decisions). A speakers' bureau functions as an on-call service. Once speakers are selected and trained, they are available to respond to requests by community groups for agency presentations. Speakers can be community people (volunteers) or agency staff.

WTD maintains a staff-supported speakers' bureau program and advertises the availability of speakers through the web site and DNRP publications. This speakers' bureau can accommodate most requests for specific topics within WTD's expertise. Larger programs and long-term projects can form and advertise their own speakers' bureau.

How a Speakers' Bureau Supports the Project

Speakers can be organized to address civic groups, social clubs, professional organizations, neighborhood associations and other groups. They can broaden the range of a public involvement effort, and be used to reach people where they gather. They can also be an effective tool to help community members gain a deeper understanding of the WTD and how it works, as well as the need for programs and planning processes. A speakers' bureau can stretch a limited outreach budget if community volunteers are used as speakers.

When to Use

A speakers' bureau is an effective tool to help educate a targeted audience about WTD, a program or a long-lived planning process. WTD maintains a speakers' bureau program through the community relations group.

When Not to Use

A speakers' bureau is not recommended for projects that are of short duration or small in scope and /or budget.

Resources

Time: Speakers must be trained and have time available for presentations prior to the announcement of a speakers' bureau availability. Key messages and consistent information must be provided to all trained speakers. The availability of the speakers' bureau must be promoted to the targeted audience.

Cost: Speakers' bureaus can be a low-cost enhancement to public involvement and communications programs. There is little fixed cost, other than the cost of providing the speakers with handouts to augment the presentation. At times, an overhead or slide presentation may be developed as an aid to support the presenter. Cost can be reduced by using presentation materials already developed for public meetings.

Staff: Speakers' bureaus can be labor-intensive. Many requests for speakers require speakers to be available in the evenings, early mornings (for breakfast meetings) or at lunchtime. To make a speakers' bureau effective, one staff member should be the designated central contact and should arrange all presentations. More than one presenter should be trained and available to deliver presentations.

Definition

A tour involves escorting a group of citizens or students through a facility or project site, and providing an explanation of the facility or project's purpose and operations in layman's terms.

How Tours Support the Project

Major facilities (i.e. treatment plants) can be a mystery to the general public. A facility tour can help reduce the unknown and deepen the public's understanding of how the facility works, why it is needed, and how citizens can hurt or help a facility (i.e., learning what should and shouldn't be flushed down a toilet or sent through a garbage disposal). A project tour (boat tour or windshield tour) can help people understand the scope of a project, why it is needed and how they might be impacted by the work. Tours are a good opportunity for educating the media and gaining their help in promoting a facility or a project.

When to Use

Facility tours can be made available on a regularly scheduled basis for the general public. They can be promoted to schools as an educational opportunity. They can also be offered, on an invitational basis, to a group of stakeholders who may have a particular interest in a project or plan that involves, affects or is affected by the facility or project to be toured.

When Not to Use

Do not use tours when you cannot safely move people through an area or when there are many hazards present. Do not try to take a larger group on a tour, unless several tour guides can break the group into smaller groups.

Resources

Time: A reservation system must be established, with a minimum number of day's notice given to the facility staff prior to a tour. A script should be developed so that groups receive consistent messages and explanations. Tours should generally not last longer than an hour. A brief discussion should precede any tour to inform people about what they will see.

Cost: Tours are a low-cost public involvement tool. Costs to prepare for tours may include purchase of hard hats, safety glasses and ear protection, if required by the facility conditions.

Staff: Tours require trained staff to accompany the tour, provide the narration, and answer questions. A good planning principle is to have at least one staff familiar with the tour area for every twelve people. Extra staff may be required in high-risk areas. Check with the tour staff in community relations and the safety office before touring people through a facility or project site.

Definition

A video is typically a professionally scripted, recorded and edited film that describes a project or program using narration and visual effects.

How Tool Supports the Project

Videos can be an effective tool to bring a project home to a wide audience. They can convey messages or technical information in a visually attractive and appealing manner.

When to Use

Consider producing a video for a major project, an ongoing program or a complex plan. Key questions to answer in analyzing whether or not a video makes sense as a tool include: How many people will see the video? How will the video be promoted? What is the goal of the video? Several videos are already available for use to promote WTD topics, including an overview of WTD, the south and west treatment plants and environmental topics. These can be used to augment a public outreach program, and to help build a fundamental understanding of the work of WTD. Professionally produced videos can be loaned to educators and other groups to extend the effectiveness of an outreach program or to support educational activities.

When Not to Use

Video production is not recommended for short duration project or programs, or projects with small audiences.

Resources

Time: Video production can take months to complete. On-site filming, interviews, scripting, editing and narration take time. A video should be produced early in a project or program and should be scripted in such a way that it lasts (remains topical and timely) throughout the life of the project or plan.

Cost: Costs are high to produce a video professionally. A professional contract is usually required to hire a production company to produce the video.

Staff: Videos are staff intensive, as staff input is required for all components of the film mentioned above

Evaluation Tools

Evaluation of public involvement programs and activities is essential. Just as it would be irresponsible to build and maintain a pumping station without regularly evaluating its performance, so too must public involvement programs be evaluated.

It is not uncommon for public involvement needs to change over the life of a project. Assessing the effectiveness of a program allows adjustments to be made, and helps to ensure that opportunities for critical feedback or dissemination of important information are not missed.

It is important to define the purpose of an evaluation and the audience for the information gathered. Will the audience be external, such as King County Council or ratepayers? Or will the audience be internal, with the results used by WTD staff to adjust program activities?

Some evaluation efforts are a numbers game. The focus is on collecting data on the number of people attending a meeting, the number of comments received, the number of staff hours spent on a given activity. In contrast, outcome-based evaluations are a systematic way to assess the extent to which a program has achieved its intended results. Outcome-based evaluations provide accountability and improve program quality.

Section 5 of the guidelines describes how to plan and conduct evaluations. Ongoing WTD evaluation efforts, such as the annual water quality survey and the Productivity Initiative are also described in that section.

In this section, tools for evaluating public involvement programs and activities are described.

The tools contained in this section are:
- Statistically Valid Surveys
- Informal Surveys/Questionnaires
- Data Tracking and Reporting
- Case Studies or Lessons Learned Evaluations

Definition

Statistically valid surveys, such as public opinion surveys, are standardized written instruments, which contain several questions about an issue to be evaluated. A sampling expert is used to design the surveying strategy and to analyze the results to ensure the data collected is statistically valid. A survey can be administered by mail, in person or by phone. The limited sample of people is considered representative of a larger group.

How Surveys Support the Project

Statistically valid surveys can present a snapshot of public opinion about a project or proposed program. They can help WTD develop an understanding of community perceptions and preferences. They can test a plan or just an element of it before the plan is fully developed. If repeated, they can test if opinions are changing over time.

When to Use

WTD often uses statistically valid surveys to reach broad, regional audiences. Surveys are useful for testing the level of understanding or awareness of particular issues. They produce large amounts of data in a consistent form.

When Not to Use

Do not use surveys to replace open dialogue with stakeholders regarding plans, programs or projects. Instead, use survey results in combination with other outreach tools to help determine public opinions.

Resources

Time: Development time can be significant to construct specific, measurable and accurate questions.

Cost: Statistically valid surveys can be complex and expensive. Generally, a survey firm is retained to construct the instrument, conduct the survey, collect the data and analyze and summarize the data. However, surveys are a cost-effective way to reach a large number of people.

Staff: If a survey firm is retained, staff time will be most important at the front end of the survey development process, helping the survey firm determine the goals of the survey and the specific questions to be asked.

Definition

Informal surveys and questionnaires are standardized written instruments that contain several questions about an issue to be evaluated. They are not designed to produce statistically valid data. Instead, they are simple tools used to obtain feedback and to gather qualitative information. They are easy to create and generate anecdotal or subjective responses. Informal surveys tend to bring responses from a self-selected group of people – those who are more personally interested in specific issues than the population at large.

How Informal Surveys/Questionnaires Support the Project

While informal surveys or questionnaires do not provide statistically valid information, they can identify specific, recurring issues or questions. They can help get targeted feedback from participants, which allows improvements or adjustments to an activity to be made before it is used again.

When to Use

Use informal surveys or questionnaires for small projects or to reach people who live along a sewer alignment or near a facility. Use them to evaluate public outreach activities, such as tours, public meetings or presentations. Use them to give residents an opportunity to comment on service delivery by WTD personnel (for example, response to complaints or emergencies). They can be delivered by mail, passed out at a meeting or event, or handed to residents by WTD field staff.

When Not to Use

Do not rely on informal surveys or questionnaires for statistically valid information. They are inadequate for assessing trends. They tend to have a low response rate and may generate responses primarily from people with strong opinions. Surveys or questionnaires are not interactive, and they only produce data – not a dialogue between WTD and the public.

Resources

Time: Sample surveys are available, so little time is required to develop the survey or questionnaire.

Cost: Informal surveys are inexpensive.

Staff: Informal surveys and questionnaires can be developed by WTD staff or by survey firms. Staff time is also required to compile the results.

Definition

Data tracking is gathering information about a project or program, such as the number of people participating in an event, the number of events held, or the number of comments received. Data tracking does not measure outcomes, such as changes in people's behavior or level of knowledge resulting from a program.

How Data Tracking and Reporting Support the Project

For a public involvement program, data tracking can provide an indication of the number of people that a program is reaching. Data tracking can help a project manager understand the depth and breadth of stakeholder response to a project. Data can be collected over time, evaluated to identify trends, and summarized in reports to management, County Council or stakeholders. Reporting can demonstrate progress towards completion of a program or plan. For example, WTD prepares semi-annual and annual reports on the implementation of the Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) for County Council.

When to Use

Use data tracking whenever a public event is held to track attendance. Data tracking is also useful for programs with a long life span, when enough data can be collected over time and used to evaluate trends. In WTD, data tracking is particularly helpful for the treatment plant tour program, and to track odor complaints. The WTD public involvement database is set up to track the number of participants in various public involvement activities.

When Not to Use

Do not rely on data tracking alone to identify trends or patterns or to evaluate the effectiveness of programs. Use other tools to evaluate outcomes (e.g., changes in people's behavior, knowledge, or skills) that result from the actions of staff.

Resources

This tool requires little in the way of resources except staff time. Simple spreadsheets or logs can be use to collect data, or it can be entered in the WTD public involvement database.

Time: Minimal lead-time is involved to start collecting data.

Cost: Data collection is a low-cost activity.

Staff: Minimal staff time is required to enter data. Compiling and analyzing data on a periodic basis may require several days, depending on the complexity of the data being collected.

Definition

A case study, or lessons learned evaluation, is a comprehensive review of a project or program by a multi-disciplinary team. The evaluation is often conducted at the end of a project, and includes all project phases and activities. Participants provide first-hand observations of interactions and events, including both descriptive and evaluative information.

How Lesson Learned Evaluations Support the Project

Lessons learned evaluations review the effectiveness of activities and the way groups interface each other. They highlight what worked well, what needs improvement, process inefficiencies, and potential corrective actions. They can also be used to identify unresolved or open issues that require follow-up action.

When to Use

WTD's construction management staff currently conducts a lessons learned evaluation at the conclusion of a construction project. They include both in-house and project consultants representing a full range of disciplines. Lessons learned evaluations could also be conducted at the conclusion of a major program, and could involve a subset of the project team. Participants are asked to apply professional judgment and share observations, and descriptive information that can be applied to future projects is gathered. Process efficiencies and recommended corrective actions are identified. Results of the evaluations are disseminated to coworkers who will be involved in similar projects in the future.

When Not to Use

Do not conduct them in the early stages of a project. Use other techniques, such as interviews, to gather sensitive information. Do not use this technique to gather statistically valid data.

Resources

The only resource required is staff time.

Time: A lessons learned evaluation usually occurs in a two to four hour meeting.

Cost: The only cost is associated with staff time.

Staff: A large number of staff and consultants are typically involved for a short period of time. A staff person is also needed to prepare a summary and disseminate results.

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