



**PEACE WAPITI PUBLIC
SCHOOL DIVISION NO. 76**
EDUCATING TODAY FOR SUCCESS TOMORROW

Community Engagement Framework

Executive Summary

A key aspect of effective local government is effective community engagement. Peace Wapiti Public School Division (PWSD) has developed this handbook to help trustees in their work of gathering the community input necessary for making meaningful decisions. Not all tools in this handbook will be used at all times, rather it is meant as a toolbox that trustees can select from based on the type of input needed. By using these tools, we are better able to be as responsive as possible to the educational goals of our students, our parents and our communities.

Accountability Statement

This Community Engagement Framework (CEF) was prepared under the direction of the PWSD School Board in accordance with the powers delegated to the Board under the Province of Alberta School Act, Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000 Chapter S-3 (Current as of November 1, 2010), Section 60, and including the following article, Section 60 (2) c, which states:

“Subject to the regulations and in co-operation with school councils, provide for parental and community involvement in schools;”

All PWSD policy decisions of which the Board is aware were considered in preparing this Framework, and the Board is committed to achieving the outcomes presented therein.

Original signed by

Stacey Pelland, Chair, Peace Wapiti School Board No. 76
June 16, 2011

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- Sheldon Rowe, Superintendent of Peace Wapiti Public School Division
- JoAnn Vanstone, Corporate Secretary of Peace Wapiti Public School Division

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Introduction

This framework is intended to assist the PWSD community to understand the broad practice of community engagement. It offers an overview and process guidance of how engagement can assist leaders in meeting their responsibility to respond and engage the community in “an ongoing dialogue to deepen everybody’s understanding of issues and trends and to generate new ideas.” (Inspiring Education Report)

What is Community Engagement?

Community Engagement is the process of building relationships with community members who will work side-by-side with us as ongoing partners, in any and every way imaginable, building an army of support for our mission, with the end goal of making the community a better place to live.

Gottlieb, H. (2006). Introduction to Community Engagement. Retrieved May 6, 2008, from http://www.help4nonprofits.com/NP_Mktg_Marketing-vs-CommunityEngagement_Art.htm

Why do we need a Framework?

The Framework is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. This involvement ranges along a continuum from informed to empowered, depending upon the issue at hand. The Framework assures the community that PWSD is committed to the engagement process, and ensures that leaders and staff know how to include the community in the most fitting way so that stakeholder involvement is authentic and legitimate. The process provides decision-makers with clear guidelines to develop and action their engagement activities and events in order to achieve the most positive results. Furthermore, the Framework ensures that PWSD continues to work towards becoming “a highly responsive and responsible education system.”

Background

In order to more effectively apply the Framework, it is important to understand the breadth and scope of the community and PWSD.

The Division Profile on the PWSD public web page has up-to-date information about our system:

<http://www.pwsd76.ab.ca/DistrictOffice/aboutus/Pages/default.aspx>

Significant Challenges include:

- Distance and Sparseness: PWSD serves approx. 6,000 students in an area approximately half the size of Vancouver Island.
- Changing Society: The traditional family is changing and schools need to be flexible with resources to meet the needs of children from a variety of families.
- Technology: Our students need the skills to adapt and use new technology.
- High School Completion Rates: While our high school completion rates are at the provincial average, we recognize that we need to continue to develop programs to address the needs of at risk students.
- Recruitment of Teachers and Administrators: Alberta will be facing a significant teacher shortage. This shortage will have its greatest impact on our northern rural communities.
- Funding: Funding especially in the area of transportation continues to be an issue.

Highlights include:

- PWSD has invested significant time in developing preschool and junior kindergarten programs to support readiness of ECS student some of which are in cooperation with local municipalities.
- PWSD is an area leader in online learning for students and teachers. We have a strong general school council group who meets with the Board regularly..
- PWSD has developed partnerships to enhance learning opportunities.
- PWSD supports partnerships with local municipalities to provide community libraries.

The following are some barriers to success intrinsic to PWSD:

- Funding and enrolment decline in rural areas
- Access to services

The Framework

Because each situation is different and will require its own tailored process, there is no set tool that can be used to meet all engagement and consultation requirements. To assist PWSB in creating a tailored process, the Framework includes a filter to determine if the process is required, and a 10-Step Process for public participation design.

The Engagement Filter

The Engagement Filter is a tool to help determine the appropriateness and feasibility of the engagement initiative. The Filter is used to generate dialogue on a number of issues related to conducting an engagement process and ensures that the process begins on a solid footing.

Is this an issue or decision that affects the community or requires the involvement of a specific set of stakeholders?

YES
Who needs to be involved in the decision?
Whose input is required to bring clarification or perspective to the

NO
Board / Executive / Staff have the information required to make decisions effectively.
The issue or decision can be

What is the priority level for this decision?

HIGH PRIORITY
High Risk
High Impact
High Emotional Response
Controversy
Political Implications
Media Attention

LOW PRIORITY
This decision has little risk or impact.
Emotional response is minimal.
Low controversy, political implication, and media attention.
Little monetary impact.

At what stage will engagement be required?

What level of engagement is optimal?

TIMELINES
At what stage of decision-making ought the public / key stakeholders to be involved?

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT
Inform
Consult
Involve
Collaborate
Empower

Who has the primary role in leading this initiative?

<p>ROLES Board Executive Staff -</p>

What do we need to have or do to complete this engagement initiative?

<p>CONSIDERATIONS Time Money Human Resources Support -</p>

10-Step Process for Community Engagement Design

Once the decision has been made to engage the community, appropriate design will ensure that the Board and the community get the most out of the exercise. The following 10-Step Process helps organizers to:

- A. Evaluate their need for public input;
- B. Determine the most appropriate way of gathering input;
- C. Gather the input; and
- D. Manage the information that was gathered.

This process helps to ensure that the experience will be positive and effective for all who are involved.

PROCESS DESIGN OVERVIEW

1. Evaluate the purpose of the engagement.
2. Define your objectives and identify the level of engagement.
3. Identify those who have a stake in the process.
4. Select from alternative engagement methods.
5. Select your scope, size and sample.
6. Review time and cost factors.
7. Design your tools.
8. Administer your tools.
9. Analyze and apply the results, and
10. Respond to the results.

1. EVALUATE THE PURPOSE OF YOUR ENGAGEMENT

Groups and organizations must first determine if they have a need for public participation and if the need is great enough to warrant a formalized process. They can do this by first thoughtfully answering the following questions:

**WHY DOES OUR ORGANIZATION NEED TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC IN THIS INSTANCE?
HOW MIGHT THIS ENGAGEMENT CHANGE WHAT WE DO?**

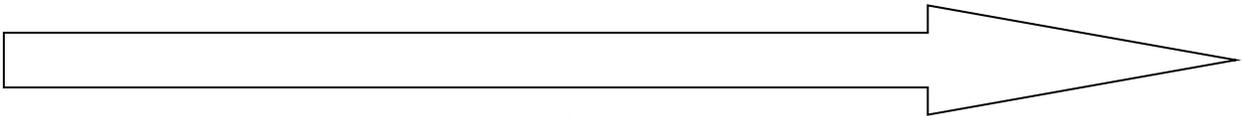
There are varied reasons why groups and organizations should involve the public in their decision-making process. Mainly, it is because **they want to know what the public or certain segments of the community (their stakeholders) thinks or how they will act.**

Asking the public for involvement, however, creates an expectation that the group or organization can react to their recommendations. Organizers must be prepared to respond to the input that they have collected. Before groups embark on public participation processes, they need to determine that they are ready for the changes that may be required and that they either have the ability to respond to the stated demands or can justify their inability to meet the expectations they have created.

2. DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES AND IDENTIFY THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

It is essential to have a very clear understanding of the level of involvement that the public or stakeholders will have – and to understand that this may vary at different times throughout the overall process. Once that has been determined, it is important to communicate this to the community in order that they understand where and how decisions will be made and the impact or influence they might have on those decisions.

PWSD is using the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation as a model to determine this level of engagement [(c) 2007 International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org.]

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation					
					
Increasing Level of Public Impact					
Public Participation Goal	INFORM To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and / or solutions.	CONSULT To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and / or decisions.	INVOLVE To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	COLLABORATE To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	EMPOWER To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to The Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example / Techniques	Fact sheets Web sites Open houses	Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings	Workshops Deliberative Polling	Citizen advisory committees Consensus-building Participatory decision-making.	Citizen juries Ballots Delegated decision

It is also important to be very specific about objectives and to know the **type** of information that must be collected, such as:

- Demographic or profile data
- Information about behaviours
- Attitudes and opinions
- Values
- Expressed preferences and interests (public choice theory)
- Existing services or facilities

In determining these things, organizers can also make choices about what information will need to be presented before the initiative begins so that participants can make informed, meaningful decisions about their input or involvement.

3. IDENTIFY THOSE WHO HAVE A STAKE IN THE PROCESS

It is important to have a comprehensive understanding of who will be affected by the initiative, and what effects the decisions will have.

- Who is asking for this process and how do they want to use it?
- What do they want to change?
- Who else might use the information, or who can benefit by it?
- Who could be affected by the input that will be gathered or by the decisions that will be made (stakeholders)?
- Who are the decision-makers? What is their attitude towards involving the public?
- Have you considered the diversity in your community and looked for ways to create social inclusion?
- What are the consequences if these people are not consulted?
- How do you involve these people? At what level? When? What is the best way?

4. SELECT FROM ALTERNATIVE ENGAGEMENT METHODS

IAP2 publishes a Toolbox (http://iap2.affiniscape.com/associations/4748/files/06Dec_Toolbox.pdf) that outlines many of the process and options that can be used throughout the spectrum of participation. The crucial thing to remember is to match the method to the level of engagement. This must be ensured whether the initiative is using the services of a contracted professional or designing the method themselves. Knowing the strengths and limitations of the tool helps in ensuring that it accomplishes what the initiative intends to achieve.

5. SELECT YOUR SCOPE, SIZE AND SAMPLE

It is important to know the geography and size of the project before it is begun, and to determine how many people must be involved for results to be valid, reliable and meaningful. Consider the following:

- Validity: the degree to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure.
- Reliability: the consistency of a measurement over repeated measurements.
- Sample size required: the amount of participants needed to ensure that responses reflect the majority of people in the community and that include minority groups.
- Scope: the boundaries of the area to be included in the initiative (consider communities of interest as well as communities of geography).
- Anticipated return rates: the degree at which response is received.
- Qualitative input versus quantitative input: the type of information that is being gathered.

6. REVIEW TIME AND COST FACTORS

“Not everything that can be measured should be measured. Not everything that should be measured, can be measured.”

Have a good understanding of the time and cost factors before you begin. This can affect the tool you choose, and your ability to execute the tool effectively and efficiently.

7. DESIGN YOUR TOOLS

Ensure that the tool that is being used matches the level of engagement required. See Appendix A for a list of tools currently being administered by the School District, or choose something from the IAP2 Toolbox. The services of a professional designer and facilitator can assist in the development of a successful tool.

8. ADMINISTER YOUR TOOLS

When appropriate, board, executive and staff can take a lead in administering the research tool. For larger or more significant events or initiatives, the services of a trained professional can help to ensure success, assist in the handling of controversial issues, allow for the full participation of the client, or provide a neutral format for involvement.

9. ANALYZE AND APPLY THE RESULTS

Results must be analyzed and applied to ensure that the process is ethical. Decisions must “incorporate the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision-making body.” (IAP2 Code of Ethics) The results of the engagement process must be directly reflected in the decisions determined as a result of the initiative and must have a genuine impact on the way things are done.

10. RESPOND TO THE RESULTS

Finally, follow-up is crucial to completion of the engagement initiative. It is important for participants to actually see how their involvement had an effect on the decisions that were made. A documented summary of the engagement initiative, together with an outline of how participant involvement affected the decisions that were made is a final step in ensuring that the process is authentic. Follow-up can also include information meetings, or other presentations that follow a “what you said / what we did” format.

Community Inclusion

PWSD is proud of the diversity it serves. We believe that student success is rooted in meaningful, authentic and culturally inclusive partnerships, and we recognize the following stakeholders as having a vested interest in education:

Our Municipalities:

- Beaverlodge
- County of Birch Hills, including: Eaglesham, Tangent, Wanham
- County of Grande Prairie, including: Bezanson, Clairmont, Elmworth, La Glace, Teepee Creek, Valhalla
- County of Saddle Hills, including: Bonanza and Savanna, Woking
- Grande Prairie
- Hythe
- M.D. of Greenview including: Debolt, Grovedale, Ridgevalley
- M.D. of Spirit River No. 133
- Rycroft
- Sexsmith
- Spirit River
- Wembley

The Hutterite Colonies of:

- Birch Meadows
- Birch Hills
- Codesa
- Crooked Creek
- Doe River
- Grandview
- Shady Lane
- Silver Valley

Our Ethnic Communities

Our Students

Our Parents

Our Teachers

The Business Community

Taxpayers

Aboriginal people, specifically the following communities:

- Horse Lake Reserve
- Kelly Lake Settlement

Current Practices

PWSD has a long-standing tradition of engaging all aspects of the school community in meaningful consultation. Current practices include:

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board News • Website • Press releases • Social media sites (Facebook and Twitter) • School newsletters • All Staff emails • General school council meets regularly • Radio and newspaper interviews • PWSD advertising • Local Trustee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board members attend school council meetings • General school council meets regularly • Accountability Pillar survey • Trustee-led stakeholder meetings • Student engagement project • PWSD Surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community presentations to Board Meetings • School council • Committee meetings between Board and the staff • Teacher Board Liaison Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School council meetings • School Improvement Plan presentations • Administration meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund raising decisions and moneys allocated from booster clubs • Etc.

The use of these tools and methods has resulted in the following measures of success:

- Results of the provincial survey on an annual basis.
- The overall satisfaction of parents, teachers, students, that their input is considered, respected and valued by the school, jurisdiction and province.

BUDGET AND RESOURCES

PWSD recognizes that for engagement processes to be successful, appropriate funds may be targeted to various initiatives. Notwithstanding current practices that are in place, this will be done on an ad hoc basis.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Samples of Community Engagement & Consultation Tools used by PWSB

Additional Community Engagement & Consultation Tools:

- www.pwsd76.ab.ca
 - News and Announcements
 - Reports
 - Events
 - Publications
 - Links to individual school websites
 - Twitter and Facebook feeds on website
 - Links to social media sites on the website – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
 - Good News Report

- Paper/E-mail subscription lists:
 - Press Releases
 - Board News
 - School Newsletters
 - Division Update
 - PWSB View book

- Technology
 - SharePoint
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Website
 - YouTube

- Events:
 - School Council Meetings
 - General School Council Meetings
 - Board Meetings
 - School Events: Christmas Concerts, Arts Nights, Athletic Events, Grand Openings etc.

- Association Work
 - Alberta School Boards Association
 - Public School Boards' Association of Alberta

- Surveys

APPENDIX B

PWSD Community Engagement & Consultation Templates

- Generic Template for Feedback and Ongoing Concerns
- General School Councils Meeting

General School Councils Meeting Feedback and Ongoing Concerns Budget

REMINDER: This information is being gathered to assist with the decision making process.

1. As you consider this budget presentation from your perspective, what stands out for you?

2. What do you see that is positive about what you heard?

POSITIVES	CAUSES CONCERN
<hr/>	<hr/>

3. What are some alternatives that you think Trustees should consider as they determine budget priorities?

4. What do you want to tell the Trustees to remember or to do as they determine priorities?

Please provide this information to JoAnn Vanstone at the meeting or by _____
via email joannvanstone@pwsd76.ab.ca or fax 780-532-4234.

Appendix C

Copyright Permission from IAP2

IAP2 Copyright: <http://www.iap2.org/displayemailforms.cfm?emailformnbr=98095>

Your form has been successfully submitted

Thank you for submitting your request to use IAP2 copyright protected materials. By submitting your request, you agree to the following terms:

1. You agree to use the copyright protected materials as they were drafted and designed by IAP2. No changes to the content, wording, or intent of IAP2 materials can be made without additional written permission from IAP2.
2. You agree to provide appropriate attribution to IAP2. (c) 2007 International Association for Public Participation www.iap2.org.
3. You agree to remit a copyright fee for IAP2 copyright protected materials that will be included in services, products and/or publications that will be sold for profit. The copyright fee is \$100 USD per use.

Individuals who do not adhere to the above terms and conditions may be pursued for copyright infringement.

No additional confirmation of your request will be provided. If you require a permissions letter, please contact the IAP2 office at iap2hq@iap2.org.

Appendix D

Communications Committee Terms of Reference

**"The greatest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished."
– George Bernard Shaw**

Working Mission:

The PWSD Communication Committee's mission is to encourage teamwork and a sense of community between PWSD Board Members, staff members, school councils, parents, students and community members. The Communications Committee's mission is achieved through consultation, feedback and ongoing updated information-sharing via press releases and PWSD and school websites and social media pages.

Objectives – We accomplish this mission by:

Assisting in the promotion of PWSD schools within their respective communities.

- i. Activities
 1. Press releases
 2. Social media sites
 3. Media relations
 4. Websites
 5. Brochures
 6. Radio, newspaper and billboard ads (when necessary)

Assisting in the exchange of information between the PWSD School Board and PWSD communities (staff, students, school council).

- ii. Activities
 1. Email for school council chairs
 - a. use the email system to collect information regarding issues of importance to school councils
 2. Survey chairs on possible topics for school council meeting
 - a. vote on topics
 - b. provide information on topics and opportunity for discussion at semi-annual school council meeting
 3. Review PWSD survey
 4. Newsletter insert
 5. Website information
 - a. The News & Announcements section of the PWSD and School websites allows the Communications Officer to communicate Board position and news.
 - b. All posts are duplicated on social media, Facebook and Twitter

Informing PWSD stakeholders of the benefits of their involvement with PWSD.

Developing name brand recognition for PWSD and its mission statement.

- iii. Activities
 1. Purchase and distribution PWSD promotional items:
 - a. Higher-end packages for School Improvement Plan (SIP) presentations and student leadership gifts (Speak Out conference attendees, Grande Prairie Volunteer Service Bureau 'Leaders of Tomorrow' award winners, Academic Awards winners, Student Council representatives, etc.) – these packages may contain items such as leatherette portfolios, 'Stylus' brand high-quality pens, travel kits with earphones, and USB drives.
 - b. Luggage tags
 - c. Pencils/pens
 - d. Sunglasses

- e. USB drives
 - f. Mugs
 - g. PWSD tattoos (water soluble)
 - h. Cloth bags
 - i. backpacks
 - j. lanyards
 - k. bracelets
 - l. water bottles
2. The inclusion of the PWSD logo on all documents generated by Central Office staff (press releases, media advisories, letters to parents, email signature line, school year calendars, publications, etc.
 3. Stories about PWSD schools, teachers and students promote the theme of 'Educating today for success tomorrow'.

To enhance rapport between Board and community members.

- iv. Activities
 1. Board gifts to presenters
 2. Board gifts for General School Council Meetings
 3. Board gifts to Chairs of School Council
 4. Encouraging Board presentation

Appendix E

Glossary of Additional Community Engagement and Consultation Terms

Bonding Social Capital	Credited to Robert Putnam who distinguishes between bonding social capital and bridging social capital, this refers to the tight connections among people who are alike in important respects (e.g.: part of the same ethno-cultural group, gender, or neighbourhood). This is important because provides a depth of personal support inside a community.	Robert D. Putnam, <i>Bowling Alone</i> (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
Bridging Social Capital	Credited to Robert Putnam who distinguishes between bonding social capital and bridging social capital, this refers to the connections between different networks and diverse perspectives. In the perspective of enhancing citizenship and building environments of trust in the reality of diverse communities, establishing trust bonds that span differences is especially valuable.	Robert D. Putnam, <i>Bowling Alone</i> (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
Citizen Engagement	A new and more specialized term describing how citizens can be involved in policy processes, and that emphasizes involvement built on genuine two-way dialogue.	
Public Participation	The deliberate and active engagement of citizens by council and / or administration – outside of the electoral process – in making public-policy decisions or in setting strategic directions. Not a series of events, but an ongoing approach to doing civic business. The language of “public participation” is giving way to that of “citizen engagement.”	Katherine A. Graham and Susan D. Phillips, <i>Making Public Participation More Effective: Issues For Local Government,</i> in K.A. Graham and S.D. Phillips (eds), <i>Citizen Engagement: Lessons In Participation From Local Government</i> (Toronto, ON: Institute of Public Administration in Canada, 1998), p. 4.
Social Capital	Robert Putnam referred to social capital as the horizontal networks that are produced through voluntary action and that generate trust in fellow citizens and in government.	Robert D. Putnam, <i>Bowling Alone</i> (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
Focus groups	Groups that involve a small group which meets and discusses an issue or policy, (they are not very representative as they are composed of a small group of individuals who have been selected for certain characteristics).	

Opinion polls	Mail or telephone surveys of their constituents to gauge public opinion on a given issue, based on random sampling and considered reasonably representative of the population and can be used to measure trends in public opinion.	
Public consultation	Processes for citizen involvement outside of elections; these processes are organized, convened and paid for by government.	
Referendum	Direct democracy, provides opportunity for citizens to contribute directly to the decision making process.	
Roundtable	Policy roundtables are small gatherings of invited stakeholders who represent particular groups of interests. The level of discussion and debate can be excellent; not very representative. An empowerment process of ongoing, formal forums for policy discussion and direction that can contribute to community empowerment (due to the open process,) ensuring the sharing of knowledge and acquiring of new skills by all participants.	
Stakeholder meeting	A cross section of citizens and representatives of interest groups and organizations affected by a particular policy or development proposal meet to discuss the impacts of the proposal. Excellent venue for discussing relevant issue; downfall lack concerns for general societal interests.	
Televoting	Combines the timeliness and randomness of the opinion poll with education and time for reflection. Participants either self-select (volunteer) or are asked to participate in a sample. Results are quick and made public downside there is no room for dialogue or debate.	
Town hall meetings	In a town hall meeting, a cross-section of political leaders, decision makers and members of the public gather for open discussion of relevant issues.	
Asymmetrical engagement	May occur when some of the participants are from other government agencies or departments. These participants may feel (consciously or not) that their participation should be more efficacious (effective) than that of others.	

Stakeholders	Anyone with an interest or stake in an outcome of an application or process.	Sarkissian et al "Community Participation in Practice"
Transparency	Decisions are made openly so that those who wish to know are informed. Decision processes are known and followed.	
Accountability groups	An empowerment process that provides a mechanism (within an authority-convened engagement) to strengthen and empower participants for ongoing action, in order to provide a link between the project and the wider community to keep accurate information flowing and corrects inaccurate information. aka - reference groups or community liaison groups	
Community planning forum	A partnership process that usually includes a short-term multipurpose event that combines interactive displays, open forums, workshop groups and informal networking to maximize input and discussion in a short time period.	
Community visioning	A partnership process where participants are invited to recall and experience the past or imagine the future in support of planning or understanding others' points of view and of articulating their own values and aspirations.	
Open space planning / Open Space Technology	Emerged in the 1980's and could be called the "anti-process process" involving minimal arrangement, no pre-determined agenda or activities with a facilitator who asks that each participant volunteer their name and a topic that they are passionate about. If there is enough interest then that participant convenes and facilitates the session, recording any notes and then reports back to the group. Works to ensure that the participants establish the agenda, especially for diverse groups where the level of trust is low and people are suspicious of formal leadership, although there is no way to control the outcomes.	Harrison Owen
Surveys	Surveys are a specific tool using structured questioning of a community of sub-group sample which represents the whole population or a sector, generating information, canvassing attitudes, and in some cases, generating interest or debate.	Wendy Sarkissian, Andrea Cook and Kevin Walsh "Community Participation in Practice"

