

CORE PRINCIPLES *for Public Engagement*

*Developed collaboratively in Spring 2009 by dozens of leaders in public engagement,
with the expectation of ongoing dialogue and periodic revision.*

May 1, 2009

In a strong democracy, citizens and government work together to build a society that protects individual freedom while simultaneously ensuring liberty and justice for all. Engaging people around the issues that affect their lives and their country is a key component of a strong democratic society.

Public engagement involves convening diverse, representative groups of people to wrestle with information from a variety of viewpoints all to the end of making better, often more creative decisions. Public engagement aims to provide people with direction for their own community activities, or with public judgments that will be seriously considered by policy-makers and other power-holders.

The more any given public engagement effort takes into consideration the following seven Core Principles, the more it can expect to effectively build mutual understanding, meaningfully affect policy development, and/or inspire collaborative action among citizens and institutions. These seven interdependent principles serve both as ideals to pursue and as criteria for judging quality. Rather than promoting partisan agendas, the application of the Core Principles creates the conditions for authentic engagement around public issues.

The following individuals made up the core PEP working group:

- ▶ **Tom Atlee**, Director of the Co-Intelligence Institute
- ▶ **Stephen Buckley**, CEO of U.S. Transparency
- ▶ **John Godec**, Board member of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
- ▶ **Reynolds-Anthony Harris**, Managing Director of Lyceum Patners & Co.
- ▶ **Sandy Heierbacher**, Director of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD)
- ▶ **Leanne Nurse**, Board Member of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD)
- ▶ **Steve Pyser**, Editor of the International Journal of Public Participation
- ▶ **Stephanie Roy McCallum**, Past President, International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)

A note about technology:

We believe the use of technology should be generally encouraged whenever appropriate to enhance and not impede these seven values -- and also that these seven principles apply to both online and offline efforts to engage the public. However, there is not yet consensus in our field on standards for the use of technology that would warrant the inclusion of specific online or electronic guidelines in this document.

The Seven Core Principles

These seven principles reflect the *common* beliefs and understandings of those working in the fields of public engagement, conflict resolution, and collaboration. In practice, people apply these and additional principles in many different ways.

1. Careful Planning and Preparation

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

2. Inclusion and Demographic Diversity

Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.

3. Collaboration and Shared Purpose

Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.¹

4. Openness and Learning

Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness.

5. Transparency and Trust

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.

6. Impact and Action

Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.

7. Sustained Engagement and Participatory Culture

Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

¹ In addition to reflecting democratic ideals of liberty, justice, and freedom for everyone, “common good” refers to that which benefits all, like a traffic light in a dangerous intersection or a cleaned-up water supply.

Organizational Endorsements

Here are just *some* of the organizations and networks that have already endorsed the Core Principles for Public Engagement. Representatives of many of these organizations played significant roles in crafting the Core Principles. A full list of both organizational and individual endorsers is posted at www.ncdd.org/pep/, and we will continue to update the online list as endorsements roll in. Email NCDD Director Sandy Heierbacher at sandy@thataway.org to join the list of endorsers.

- ▶ The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), www.iap2.org
- ▶ The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD), www.ncdd.org
- ▶ Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), www.ica-usa.org
- ▶ International Association of Facilitators (IAF), www.iaf-world.org
- ▶ National League of Cities, www.nlc.org
- ▶ Association for Conflict Resolution's Environment & Public Policy Section, www.mediate.com/acrepp/
- ▶ ToP (Technology of Participation) Trainers Network, www.ica-usa.org/index.php?pr=top-network
- ▶ Co-Intelligence Institute, www.co-intelligence.org
- ▶ League of Women Voters, www.lwv.org
- ▶ Public Agenda, www.publicagenda.org
- ▶ Canadian Community for Dialogue & Deliberation (C2D2), www.c2d2.ca
- ▶ Forum Foundation, www.forumfoundation.org
- ▶ The Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, <http://cdd.stanford.edu/>
- ▶ AmericaSpeaks, www.americaspeaks.org
- ▶ National Issues Forums Institute, www.nifi.org
- ▶ Everyday Democracy, www.everyday-democracy.org
- ▶ The Democracy Imperative, www.unh.edu/democracy
- ▶ Public Dialogue Consortium, www.publicdialogue.org
- ▶ U.S. Transparency, www.UStransparency.com
- ▶ Network for Peace through Dialogue, www.networkforpeace.com
- ▶ Common Sense California, www.commonsenseca.org
- ▶ The Jefferson Center, www.jefferson-center.org
- ▶ Global Facilitator Service Corps, www.globalfacilitators.org
- ▶ Deliberative Democracy Consortium, www.deliberative-democracy.net
- ▶ Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, www.iaaw.ca
- ▶ Future Search Network, www.futuresearch.net
- ▶ Institute for Conflict Analysis and Intervention at James Madison University Communication Studies, www.jmu.edu/commstudies/conflictstudies.shtml
- ▶ The Policy Consensus Initiative, www.policyconsensus.org

How this Document was Created

The Public Engagement Principles (PEP) Project was launched in mid-February 2009 as the result of several unrelated discussions about how the broad dialogue, deliberation, and public engagement fields of practice could or should support Barack Obama's January 21st memorandum on transparency and open government. The memo stated that the Obama administration would work to “ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration” to create an “unprecedented level of openness in Government.” The memo calls for the creation of an Open Government Directive that will instruct executive departments and agencies to take specific actions in the areas of transparency, participation, and collaboration.

Our field was abuzz in meetings, on email discussion lists, and on phone calls considering how we could support this effort, and people seemed to agree on one thing in particular: our field of practice, as a whole, needs to agree on and articulate what we consider to be quality public engagement. And this clarity, whether or not it impacts the Open Government Directive, would be of great benefit to our field.

A small working group, listed on page one, formed to consider how to move forward quickly in as collaborative and transparent a way as possible, and the group decided to encourage broad involvement among our networks in the formation of a set of principles for public engagement we can all get behind. A simple forum (bulletin board) was created on the website of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) to enable people to post and comment on existing sets of public engagement principles, values, and guidelines issued by various organizations and governing institutions, and to start developing a unified set of principles based on the work that had already been done. NCDD's Director, Sandy Heierbacher, initially posted about a dozen sets of principles, and another dozen were soon added by others.

Members of NCDD, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), and other networks were informed about the project, and dozens of people with different levels and types of experience in public engagement got involved.

Tom Atlee of the Co-Intelligence Institute created a draft document integrating all the statements and comments that were posted to the forum, which was subsequently critiqued by dozens of professionals and revised numerous times under the guidance of the core working group. A near-final version was distributed to leading organizations, both for feedback and to get the ball rolling for endorsements. At the same time, the text was posted to an open document review website to allow people to critique statement by statement. The final version on these pages emerged from that process, and was approved by the core group. It is currently being distributed through various public engagement, conflict resolution, and collaboration networks, inviting all who are interested to endorse the Core Principles as an organization or as an individual.

Please feel free to contact ncdd@thataway.org if you have questions about this document, or if you wish to endorse.