

U.S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION VIDEO  
TRAINING PROGRAM**

FACILITATION GUIDE

MODULE 1.  
**INTRODUCTION  
TO MEANINGFUL  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**



**PUBLIC  
PARTICIPATION**  

---

**GUIDE**

*Engage the public. Preserve the planet.*

## BEGINNING THE CLASS:

Start off the class with a fun and active way of greeting and introducing each other. Below are some ideas. You may run this program over multiple days, so use different exercises to break the ice at the beginning of each session or after lunch.

### ***Child to Adult***

Have each person identify an activity or possession that they loved as a child, and how it reflects their character as an adult.

### ***Interviews***

Pair off students in groups of two, ask people to match up with someone they don't know if possible, have them interview each other (5 minutes each) and then introduce each other to the class.

### ***The 15 Second Me***

Everyone gets exactly 15 seconds to introduce themselves (facilitator keeps time). What do you most want people to know, how to make a good first impression?

### ***What's in Your Pocket?***

Ask everyone to pull something that is important to them or says something about them out of their pocket, wallet, purse, or bag and use it to describe themselves to the class.

### ***Connecting Stories***

Have everyone divide into small groups. The goal is to connect mini stories using post-it notes. Each person must share at least one item that connects to the other mini stories. First player shares an interesting story or memory. The next person can tell a related story that connects some way to the first. And so on. The group with the longest chain of stories win.

## BEFORE YOU START THE VIDEO:

- Explain that we will be going through the materials together, watching a video that helps to present the information, conducting class discussions, and working on exercises together

## SECTION 1:

## Considering Public Participation

WORKBOOK PAGES: 2 - 3

VIDEO TIMING: 0:00 - 2:23



### GROUP DISCUSSION

#### Characteristics of Good Public Participation

WORKBOOK PAGE: 3

VIDEO TIMING: 1:48 - 2:23

Pause the video. Pose the questions below to the group, keep track of the conversation and summarize some of the key points made on a flip chart or other board. Draw out students on these questions, additional questions you might use are included in blue.

- How are we working with the public now?
- Are we ensuring inclusion of all peoples, particularly vulnerable communities?
  - Are we actively seeking input and involvement?
  - Are we mostly responding to stakeholders who are being most aggressive?
  - Do we actively avoid interaction?
  - How do we engage vulnerable communities, if at all?
- Does our interaction with the public have any impact on our decisions and actions? If so, how? If not, why not?
  - Ask people to name a time where public input may have made a difference?
  - How do we normally react to public inquiries and requests?
- What are the challenges we face in understanding the issues and concerns of the public?
  - Are we in a position to respond and/or discuss concerns, how does management react, what are some of the obstacles we face?
  - How do we overcome those obstacles?
- Do we believe the public could be more involved in making decisions about the future of issues in their communities?
  - Ultimately do we believe in the potential value of engaging the public, what about managers and other leaders, does our organizational culture support or hinder involvement?
  - Are there policies in place that ensure public participation?
  - Are there policies for engaging indigenous groups differently?

## 1.1

**Start at the Beginning: What is Public Participation?**

WORKBOOK PAGES: 4 - 5

VIDEO TIMING: 2:34 - 5:01

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

## Definition of Public Participation

WORKBOOK PAGE: 6

VIDEO TIMING: 4:40 - 5:01

Pause the video. Pose the questions below to the group, keep track of the conversation and summarize some of the key points made on a flip chart or other board. Draw out students on these questions, additional questions you might use are included in blue.

- Review the definition of public participation and the differences between public participation and public relations.
  - Be sure to talk about buy-in, how often do we conduct a process where we already know the answer but act like the public's input could matter
  - Make sure to acknowledge that there is nothing wrong with public relations in the right circumstances as long as we are honest with our stakeholders
  - Draw people out on the different aspects of the definition:
    - Public participation is a **process** not a single event or meeting
    - It can be **any** process, we should not always follow the same set of activities
    - Public participation needs to lead to an **action or decision** such that public input actually matters
    - **Fair** involvement means that all stakeholders have access to the process
    - **Meaningful** involvement means that public input has the real potential for impacting the outcomes
- What is important about this definition to you and how might public participation apply in your work?
  - Try to identify the situations and circumstances where public input would actually be welcome and could make a difference

## 1.2

### What Are the Benefits of Public Participation?

WORKBOOK PAGES: 7 - 11

VIDEO TIMING: 5:12 - 10:20



#### GROUP DISCUSSION

#### Benefits of Public Participation

WORKBOOK PAGE: 11

VIDEO TIMING: 12:57 - 13:45

Pause the video. Pose the questions below to the group, keep track of the conversation and summarize some of the key points made on a flip chart or other board. Draw out students on these questions, additional questions you might use are included in blue.

- Where have we experienced real participation vs. just public relations?
  - Have we experienced projects where public input made a difference?
- What difference does it make in how the public feels about the decisions being made?
  - Have we experienced the kinds of benefits described above?
- Do you think the possible benefits of public participation could apply to projects in your country? Why or why not?
  - If not, ask them why not, and what we can do to improve the situation?
- What types of projects and communities could benefit from better participation, are vulnerable populations included? In what kinds of circumstances should the public voice be heard?
  - Ask them to think about projects that did not go well because of public anger or reaction, how could better participation have made a difference?

## SECTION 2:

**What Does Good Public Participation Look Like?**

WORKBOOK PAGES: 12 - 16

VIDEO TIMING: 13:54 - 18:14

**GROUP DISCUSSION****Characteristics of Good Public Participation**

WORKBOOK PAGE: 16

VIDEO TIMING: 17:31 - 18:14

Pause the video. Pose the questions below to the group, keep track of the conversation and summarize some of the key points made on a flip chart or other board. Draw out students on these questions, additional questions you might use are included in blue.

- Consider the six characteristics above. How is this approach to public participation similar or differ from what you are doing now?
  - Ask them to think about projects that did not go well?
  - How could better participation have made a difference?
  
- What types of activities contribute to having constructive conversations with your communities?
  - How well do we interact with the communities surrounding our projects?
  - Ask them about circumstances where things went well, why did that happen?
  
- How could we improve the use of these conversations?
  - What prevents us from doing more, what could we do to improve this interaction?
  - Are we including all possible stakeholders in these conversations?
  - What could we do to assure more comprehensive participation?

## SECTION 3.

## What Are The Necessary Conditions For Successful Public Participation

WORKBOOK PAGES: 17 - 22

VIDEO TIMING: 18:21 - 23:40 (two discussions)



### GROUP DISCUSSION

#### Public Participation Definition

WORKBOOK PAGE: 20

VIDEO TIMING: 21:25 - 22:01

Pause the video. Pose the questions below to the group, keep track of the conversation and summarize some of the key points made on a flip chart or other board. Draw out students on these questions, additional questions you might use are included in blue.

- What is important about this definition to you and how might public participation apply in your work?
  - Reflect on the opening discussion of the definition, how does what we have learned about public participation affect how we view public participation in relation to our work?
- How is this definition affected by our culture, policies, and regulations?
  - Keep track of the constraints. Ask participants, are these real constraints or are we making assumptions about what is possible?
- Think about the above factors and discuss our capacity to effectively engage our communities: where do we have challenges and what can we do to improve our capacity?
  - Keep track of the constraints. Ask participants, are these real constraints or are we making assumptions about what is possible?



## GROUP DISCUSSION

### Wrap-Up Conversation

WORKBOOK PAGE: 22

VIDEO TIMING: 23:07 - 23:40 (END)

Pause the video. Pose the questions below to the group, keep track of the conversation and summarize some of the key points made on a flip chart or other board. Draw out students on these questions, additional questions you might use are included in blue.

- What are the key constraints that we need to consider, to what degree can they be overcome?
  - Keep track of the constraints. Ask participants, are these real constraints or are we making assumptions about what is possible?
  
- How can we work within our organizations to improve our overall understanding of and commitment to doing better public participation?
  - Ask them who needs to be convinced, what are some strategies to begin these conversations internally?
  
- What are the types of issues and challenges where public input could really make a difference in the decisions we make?
  - Ask them about specific types of projects and decisions, how might better knowledge of public concerns, issues, and experiences help make better decisions?
  
- How could we increase our level of transparency with the public?
  - What do our stakeholders most need to know and understand? How could we improve our level of communication about these items?