



Public Engagement and Structured Decision Making: Lessons from Musqueam

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Stakeholder engagement vs. broad public engagement

One area of planning and decision support that could benefit significantly from more thoughtful application of Structured Decision Making (SDM) is public engagement. In almost any planning context, from resource planning to community planning, more methodological rigour is typically needed to engage the public. Too often key sectors of the community are alienated, choose not to participate, or shrink at the prospect of endless meetings. Conversely, “professional citizens,” “the irate minority” or “the same ten people” show up and dominate stakeholder meetings or even the entire process. Information open houses barely scratch the surface of engagement and opinion surveys and on-line tools rarely offer opportunities for deliberation or substantial insight into wise, long-term decisions.

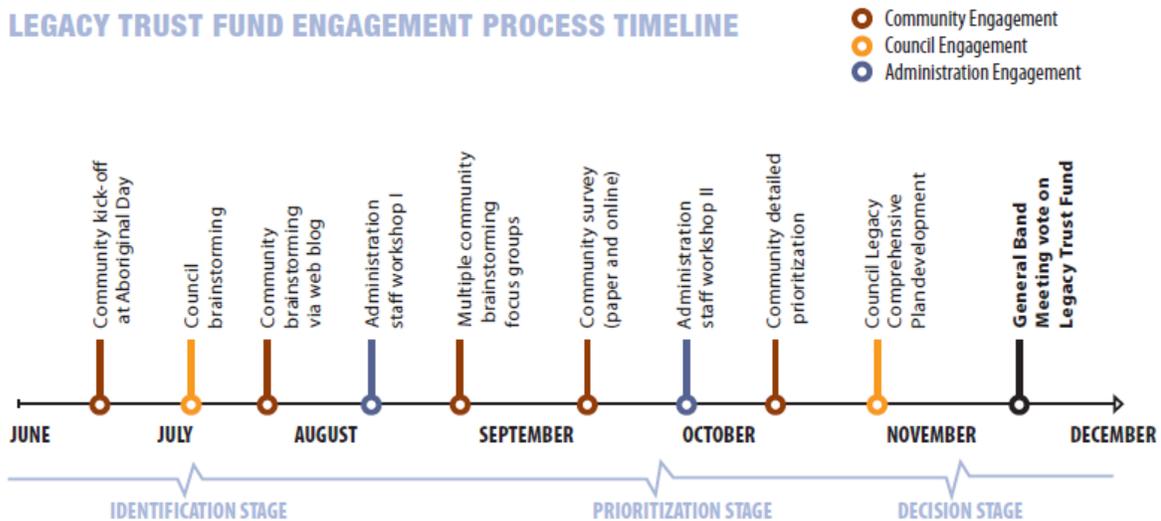
Accountable decision makers -- from small city councils to the office of state governors or provincial cabinet ministers -- may not have faith in the results if they feel it does not reflect the broader public values. This could undermine solid stakeholder committee results, or open the door to interest groups to subvert the process. SDM offers a way to develop a clear and consistent link between broad public engagement and more focused stakeholder deliberation. Improved data linkages and stakeholder/public data return-flow between each phase of the planning process combined with more statistically rigorous and structured survey tools would help address this issue.

Musqueam Legacy Trust Planning

EcoPlan supported Musqueam Indian Band, a First Nation in British Columbia, who decided to use SDM with great success as part of their member engagement approach. As one of the Four Host Nations for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, Musqueam signed onto a 2010 Legacies Agreement that created a special \$17 million Legacy Trust Fund established for the benefit of present and future members of the Band. Musqueam approached engagement from various aspects. Value-focused engagement was undertaken with Musqueam community members, and this was integrated with thoughtful group deliberation with Musqueam Band Administration and Musqueam Band Council throughout the process.



LEGACY TRUST FUND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS TIMELINE



Over 500 ideas were generated and packaged. Using the eleven community objectives as evaluation criteria, surveys were developed and used at both group meetings and modified for broad community input. Using analytical tools and techniques from decision analysis, a clear list of priority projects emerged. The process also had the benefit of informing, educating and building trust around the results. This became clear when the final set of projects was put to a community vote at a Musqueam Indian Band General Assembly meeting. Although Musqueam Band Council was prepared to defend the list of projects based on past experiences where Community-Band Council tensions could run high, there was not one community member that questioned Council and it went right to a vote. It passed by an unprecedented 2-to-1 margin. Further, with the confidence of the community behind them, Musqueam Band Council began implementing project immediately and within six months over 75% of the projects had been acted upon.

New Directions

Using SDM in an integrated way to facilitate better group deliberation and more meaningful public engagement opens many opportunities. Well thought-out approaches help address issues around inconsistent attendance at focus groups and community meetings while improving the transparency of the overall planning process. Using new tools and technologies at workshops, meetings and in open houses (e.g., influence diagrams, interactive decision models, audience response systems, etc.) and better structuring of surveys, improves confidence. Creative engagement methods - including different meeting facilitation techniques and technologies (e.g., decision support software), the use of social, can all be helpful for



getting ideas out and input in. Integrating these tools into an overarching framework that clearly shows *how* and *why* they are incorporated into the process is critical, and helps avoid the “engagement as an end in itself” syndrome that can so easily occur with a less structured process.

The Musqueam planning experience clearly demonstrated the benefits of using an SDM approach to structure planning and decision processes with multiple, integrated methods (e.g., direct choice, conjoint, paired comparison, pathway surveys with large public surveys and value weighting / consequence table analysis with smaller groups) and more focused deliberative stakeholder sessions and broad public engagement at each step of the way. Collectively, this approach and its tools can help:

- Improve the overall planning process and quality of information it generates;
- Increase transparency and buy-in across a much broader group – hopefully the majority of the affected population;
- Increase confidence with decision makers and leaders, particularly when more difficult choices are required; and,
- Better organize large quantities of stakeholder-, community, and technically-generated information to help avoid the “tyranny of choice” problem.