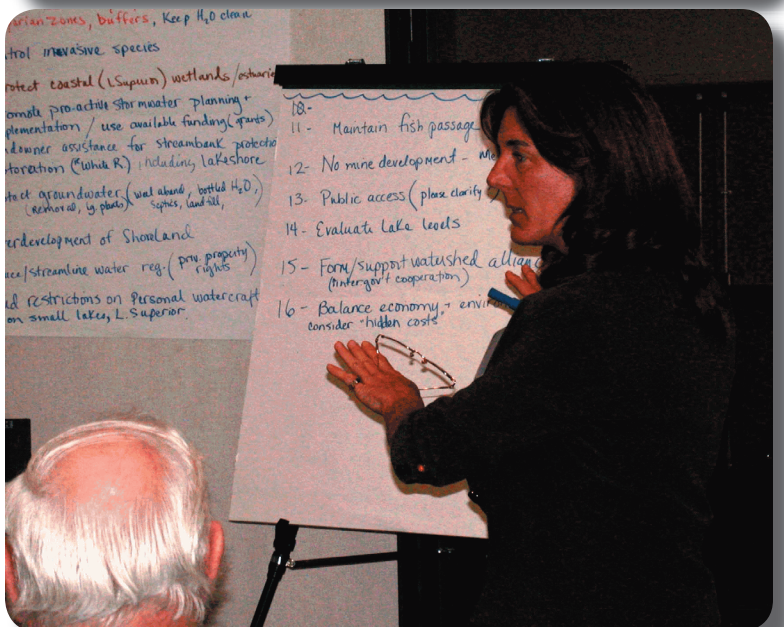




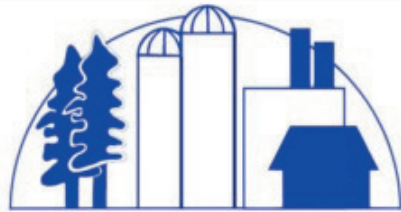
# Crafting an Effective Plan for Public Participation

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Center for Land Use Education



Center for Land Use Education



### Project Partners

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The Center for Land Use Education is located at the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point

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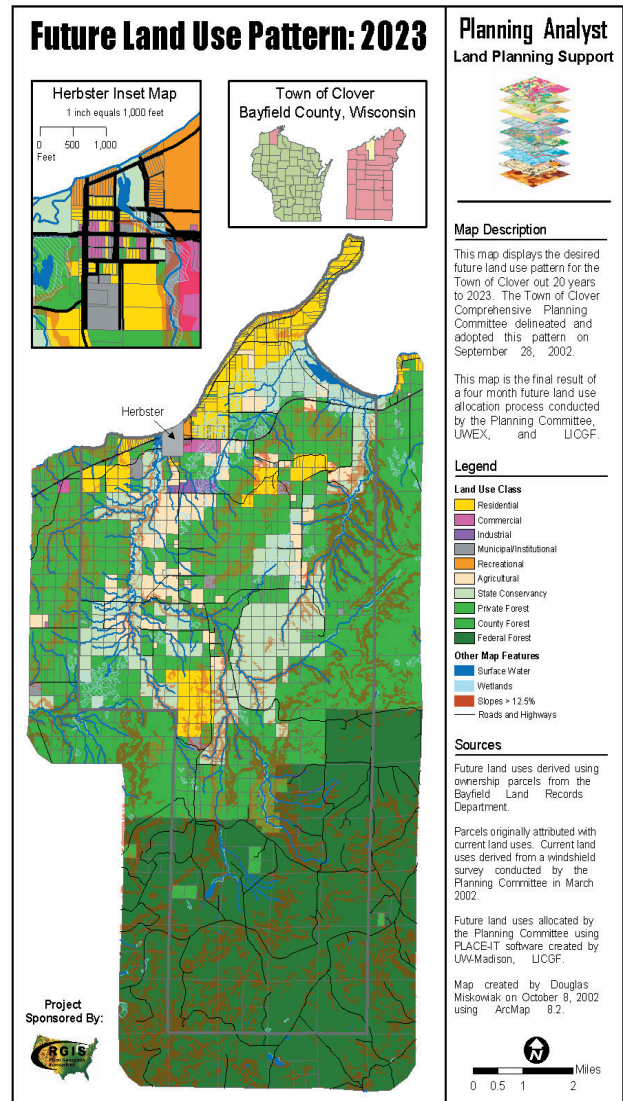


# INTRODUCTION

Effective public participation is both functional for planning and meaningful to the public. Participation is functional when it helps to create better decisions and a more thoughtful community plan. Participation is meaningful when the public has opportunities to influence decisions and feels a sense of ownership for the community plan. A Public Participation Plan (PPP), which establishes a model for effective public involvement, contains written procedures for including the public in a community’s planning process.

This bulletin is for professional planners, community educators, and local officials responsible for crafting a PPP. Although, this bulletin is not a recipe for writing a PPP, it does provide a framework for tailoring a plan that fits local needs and capacities. In addition to the framework, there are tips, examples, and worksheets to help prepare a sufficiently detailed, yet practical plan for public participation.

This map displays the results of a public participation process. An active citizen planning committee, with help from the UW-Extension and LICGF delineate their vision for the Town of Clover out to year 2023.





# BLUEPRINT FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION – THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The PPP provides the means to communicate generally what is needed to effectively involve the public in planning. Like a blueprint, the PPP provides general information to help reach a desired result – to build a community

plan with public involvement. Box 1 provides a model outline for developing a PPP and will serve to guide the remainder of this bulletin.

## Box 1. Outline of a Model Public Participation Plan

- i. Cover Page: Include the title of the plan, names of contributing authors, names of jurisdictions involved, and the dates for when the plan is effective.
- ii. Table of Contents: List the content headings and the page numbers where they are found.
- I. Introduce the Plan for Public Participation
  - A. Link Participation to Planning: Describe the activity that requires or desires public involvement.
  - B. Recognize the Intended Audience: Describe who this plan is intended for and how they should use it.
  - C. Define Guiding Principles: Define an overarching vision for public participation.
- II. Four Cornerstones of the PPP: Categories of information essential to craft an effective public participation plan.
  - A. Purpose Cornerstone – What the public is involved to do and when.
  - B. People Cornerstone – People involved in participation.
  - C. Methods Cornerstone – Methods or tools used to engage the public.
  - D. Evaluation Cornerstone – Procedures for documenting and evaluating participation activities.
- III. Integrate a Public Participation Strategy: Text that compiles the Four Cornerstones into a strategy for implementing and evaluating public participation activities.

# I. INTRODUCE THE PLAN FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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## **Link Participation to Planning**

The PPP should describe the fundamental reason for developing a plan for participation by making the link between public involvement and the activity that requires or desires it. This bulletin references community planning as the activity that requires public involvement. Waupaca County's PPP for example, describes comprehensive planning as the activity for which public participation is desired.<sup>1</sup> It also describes the State's Comprehensive Planning Law and requirements for public participation.

## **Recognize the Intended Audience**

The PPP is intended to be used by those responsible for engaging the public in planning (i.e., local elected officials, planning staff, plan commissioners, or committee members). They use the PPP as a guide to implement public participation activities and engage the public to help make decisions and develop a community plan. The PPP may also be intended for the public itself, for the purpose of instructing them how to become more involved in the community's planning process.

## **Define Guiding Principles**

The local PPP should define the community's broad intentions for public participation and how public participation should be used to guide community planning. In the introduction to this bulletin, effective participation is defined as being both functional for planning and meaningful to the public. These are broad statements meant as an overarching vision of what public participation is meant to achieve and how the public is to be engaged. For example, the Waupaca County PPP describes the principles of American Democracy to serve as guiding principles for public involvement. Box 2 (next page) provides several more examples to help construct this section of the PPP.

<sup>1</sup> Waupaca County is located in the State of Wisconsin. Waupaca County developed their Public Participation Plan in 2004. Their plan can be viewed on-line using the following Web address: [www.wcedc.org/CP/Public Participation Plan - Final.pdf](http://www.wcedc.org/CP/Public%20Participation%20Plan%20-%20Final.pdf).

## Box 2. Example Guiding Principles

### **Public participation should be functional for planning.**

- ☒ Better decisions and a more thoughtful community plan should result. Public involvement should help planners and local officials better do their job. Public involvement should help planners identify relevant community needs and make better decisions that more accurately reflect the public's values and knowledge.
- ☒ Plans should lead to implementation. Community plans, created with support from a broad set of public stakeholders, are more likely to get implemented into action. Public advocates are required to help encourage positive change.

### **Public participation should be meaningful to the public.**

- ☒ The public should have influence. Planning affects the lives and properties of all members of the community and they deserve opportunities to become involved. The public's judgment about issues that affect their lives and properties are valid (Walsh, 1997).
- ☒ Equal opportunity and active participation. All members of the public must be provided with the equal opportunity to become involved. Participation should enable the public to be more active in governance. Active participation leads to taking responsibility for one's community (Walsh, 1997).

## II. FOUR CORNERSTONES OF THE PPP



The essential information of the PPP is contained within four main categories:

1. Purpose – What the public is involved to do and when.
2. People – People involved in participation.
3. Methods – The methods or tools used to engage the public.
4. Evaluation – Procedures for documenting and evaluating participation activities.

These categories are the Four Cornerstones and are the building blocks of an effective PPP. This bulletin describes each cornerstone individually, in logical progression. This is also how the local PPP is constructed. The plan must begin by better understanding what tasks to complete and who should be involved to complete them. Next, methods are selected to best achieve tasks and that best fit the capacities of the people involved. Finally, the PPP must identify a protocol to document and evaluate participation

activities to ensure that tasks are successfully completed and the public is sufficiently engaged.

Each cornerstone is supplemented with a series of worksheets and examples to help construct the broad information needed for a local PPP. Once this information is compiled, worksheet seven will help to integrate a strategy for public participation and worksheet eight will help document and evaluate individual participation activities.

### Purpose Cornerstone – What the Public is Involved to Do and When

The Purpose Cornerstone of a PPP defines what the public is involved to do and when. Ultimately, the public is involved to help make better decisions and a more thoughtful community plan. To create a plan, many tasks and products must be created along the way.

The Purpose Cornerstone should:

- A. List planning tasks to achieve to create a community plan.
- B. Establish which planning tasks require or would benefit from public involvement.
- C. Gauge when planning tasks must be achieved and when the public must be involved.

*Use Worksheet 1 (see Appendix A) to help complete the Purpose Cornerstone.*

### A. List Planning Tasks

The Purpose Cornerstone of the PPP should include a list of planning tasks to achieve throughout a planning process. Planning tasks are the assignments to achieve or products to create to develop a community plan. Including a list of tasks in the PPP not only provides a functional checklist for local planning officials, but it also makes a transparent link between public participation and community planning.

Defining the stages of a planning process is a good way to begin creating the list of planning tasks.<sup>2</sup> Stages categorize the planning process into manageable/identifiable segments and illustrate a broad path for planning. Stages describe what happens, in general, first, next, and last during the planning process. Data Collection and Analysis, Issue Identification, and Goal and Objective Formulation are three stages identified in a model planning

Public participation activities occur throughout a planning process, not at any one particular planning stage

process (see Figure 1, pp 10-11). In the PPP, list planning tasks that occur at each stage of your planning process.

### B. Establish Which Tasks Require Public Participation

The next step is to establish which planning tasks require or would benefit from public participation. As a general rule, the public should participate when planners must meet any of four participation objectives to successfully achieve a planning task (see Box 3).

### C. Gauge a Timeline to Conduct Participation

Finally, the Purpose Cornerstone must address when participation should occur. Public participation activities occur throughout a planning process, not at any one particular planning stage (Randolph, 2004; UWEX, 2001). Public participation happens in parallel to the planning process (see Figure

#### **Box 3. Determine Participation Objectives**

(adapted from Arnstein, 1969; Glass, 1979; Randolph, 2004; Sanoff, 2000).

**Awareness** – The public must be aware of planning and participation activities before they can participate.

**Education** – The public must be better prepared and educated before they can productively participate.

**Input** – Planners need to supplement or verify factual information with the public's practical experiences, attitudes, or beliefs.

**Decision-making** – The public wants to contribute to decision-making before they accept proposed planning tasks or products.

<sup>2</sup> Other CLUE publications detail the process of defining planning stages. Visit the CLUE Website: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/landcenter/pubs.html>.



1, pp 10-11). For example, during the “Issue Identification” stage of planning, public participation activities involve the public to identify issues.

While developing the PPP, you may find

that scheduling participation to exact dates is difficult. In these instances, use the defined stages of a plan process to set a basic timeline for completing tasks and conducting participation. However, if specific dates are firmly scheduled, include them in the PPP.

### Sidebar 1: Level of Public Influence

When determining participation objectives it is important to understand how much influence each objective affords the public. The chart helps to illustrate levels of public influence. Awareness and Education help to build the capacity for the public to become involved further. Used alone, they do not afford the public influence over community planning. Input gathering is the first participation objective that provides the public any influence over planning, but only if decision-makers choose to use the public’s input. The public is afforded the most influence at the Decision-making objective. With Decision-making, the public either shares or has the responsibility to make decisions that directly influence the community plan.

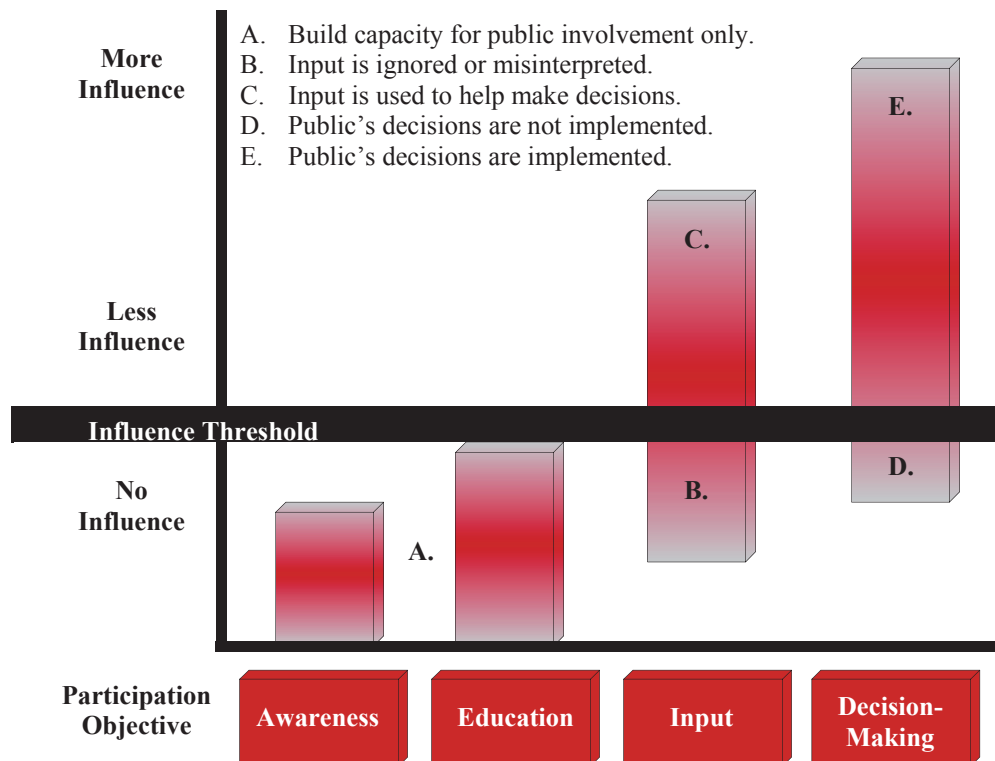






Figure 1. Stages of a typical planning process.

Planning Phases	Pre-Planning			
Planning Stages	 <b>Community Diagnosis</b>	 <b>Process Design</b>	 <b>Data Collection &amp; Analysis</b>	 <b>Issue Identification</b>
Planning Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine purpose and readiness for planning</li> <li>Explore preliminary issues and concerns</li> <li>Profile existing plans and implementation tools for their effectiveness</li> <li>Build capacity to conduct planning</li> <li>Identify planning participants and stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design the planning process</li> <li>Identify opportunities for public participation and education</li> <li>Establish roles, responsibilities, and membership of groups involved in planning</li> <li>Establish budget and identify funding sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify data and information needs</li> <li>Gather technical, spatial, and citizen-based data</li> <li>Analyze and interpret data to derive patterns and trends</li> <li>Provide information to citizens and other decision-makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key community issues, challenges, opportunities and desires</li> <li>Verify and support issues using local data and analyses</li> <li>Prioritize issues</li> </ul>
Public Participation	<b>1) Purpose Cornerstone: Establish planning tasks, participation objectives, and</b>			
Participation Objectives	<b>2) People Cornerstone: Identify stakeholders, professionals, and local officials</b>			
	<b>3) Methods Cornerstone: Identify the methods and tools used to engage the public</b>			
<b>Awareness (A)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Awareness Raising Methods used at every planning stage</li> <li>Direct mail (A) to solicit committee participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government (DM) appoints Plan Commission and reviews budget and contract</li> <li>Plan Commission (DM) approves the plan process, develop public participation plan, and negotiate consultant contract</li> <li>Management subcommittee (DM) review project budget and negotiate consultant contract</li> <li>Participation subcommittee (DM) develop a public participation plan</li> <li>Education sessions (Ed) of plan process design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster work groups (DM) review roles and responsibilities, appoint chair and vice-chair, review plan process, and public participation plan.</li> <li>Kickoff meeting (Ed, I) general education of the plan process and public participation</li> <li>Plan commission workshops (Ed) provide information about why and how to form a plan commission</li> <li>Local governments (DM) create local plan commissions</li> <li>Citizen experts (DM) field check data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth "SLOGO" Content (A) involve youth to create a plan slogan or logo to promote awareness of planning process</li> <li>Survey (I) identify citizen-based opportunities, issues, and desires with incentives to return survey</li> <li>Focus Groups (DM) identify expert-based issues, opportunities and desires for five planning issues</li> <li>Open House (Ed, I) provide planning education, review community data, and identify issues, opportunities and desires</li> </ul>
<b>Education (Ed)</b>				
<b>Input (I)</b>				
<b>Decision-Making (DM)</b>				
	<b>4) Evaluation Cornerstone: Document and evaluate the results of individual</b>			

Planning			Post-Planning	
<b>Goal &amp; Objective Formulation</b>	<b>Strategy Formulation</b>	<b>Plan Review &amp; Approval</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Monitoring &amp; Assessment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop goals and measurable objectives related to planning issues</li> <li>• Develop indicators to monitor progress towards stated goals and objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop planning alternatives to meet goals and objectives</li> <li>• Identify places suitable for achieving goals and objectives</li> <li>• Identify possible strategies to implement planning alternatives</li> <li>• Evaluate impacts of alternatives</li> <li>• Select preferred alternative and strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present plan for community residents and officials to review</li> <li>• Make changes to resolve plan inconsistencies and reflect public concerns</li> <li>• Plan commission recommends final draft of plan for adoption</li> <li>• Governing body holds public hearing and formally adopts plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop or amend required implementation tools</li> <li>• Apply implementation strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor progress towards achieving stated plan goals, objectives and indicators</li> <li>• Review and revise plan and associated implementation tools as needed</li> </ul>

gauge a timeline for completing tasks (above).

involved in public participation.

and stakeholders.

- |   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Direct contact (A)</b> contact targeted stakeholders for participation at cluster meetings</li> <li>• <b>Educational Sessions (Ed)</b> at beginning of each cluster meeting for each element</li> <li>• <b>Public Input (I)</b> opportunity at each cluster meeting for public to air concerns</li> <li>• <b>Plan Commission (DM)</b> develop element goals and objectives and discuss broad policy options</li> <li>• <b>Radio Interview (A)</b> Plan Commission representative will interview to discuss planning progress</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community Fair (A, Ed)</b> provide information and activities regarding land use for adults and youth</li> <li>• <b>Plan Commission (DM)</b> Review land use related goals, objectives, constraints and mapping categories.</li> <li>• <b>Interactive GIS (DM)</b> Citizen focus group uses GIS to create planning alternatives that meet goals and objectives</li> <li>• <b>Radio/TV Interview (A)</b> Plan commission interviews to discuss planning progress</li> <li>• <b>Plan Commission (DM)</b> Discuss policy options. Review land use alternatives.</li> <li>• <b>Educational Sessions (Ed)</b> Discuss how alternatives were created and how they influence the plan</li> <li>• <b>Plan Commission (DM)</b> Modify and approve preferred land use alternative</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Open House (Ed, I)</b> Review the plan and gather public input</li> <li>• <b>Public Hearing (I)</b> Gather public input concerning the plan</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Citizen Advisory Committee (DM)</b> to identify and suggest the use of relevant implementation tools or policies</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Citizen watchdog program (I)</b> Citizens can continually provide comments to the plan department or plan commission about the municipalities land use problems or of possible land use opportunities</li> <li>• <b>Plan Commission (DM)</b> Keeps track of citizen comments and helps bring issues to the table for discussion and possible future planning</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|---|---|

participation activities.

## People Cornerstone – People Involved in Participation.

The People Cornerstone of a PPP identifies those who are involved in community planning. It should describe the public who become involved in the process and the professionals and local officials who facilitate that involvement.

*Use Worksheets 2, 3 & 4 (see Appendix A) to help complete the People Cornerstone.*

### General Public and Stakeholders

The People Cornerstone first identifies those who the PPP intends to involve—the general public and stakeholders. The general public may include all those who live, work, or play in the area outlined in the plan. The PPP should notify local planning officials of their duty to welcome and encourage the general public to attend any planning or participation activity.

Extending an open invitation for participation to the general public is not enough to secure broad representation of public interests – the PPP must also actively target stakeholders. Stakeholders are individuals or groups that potentially have an interest in specific planning issues or may be affected by resulting decisions (Walsh, 1997). For example, landowners, renters, realtors, developers, and first-time homebuyers are stakeholders in affordable housing issues. Involvement among a representative set of stakeholders can help ensure that the plan

reflects community needs and that planning is not dominated by any single affluent or vocal interest group (Randolph, 2004). As a general rule, plans are found to be of better quality, are used more often, and stand a better chance of being implemented when a broad set of stakeholders are involved (Burby, 2003).

A stakeholder analysis identifies which people or groups to target for planning (see Worksheet 2). For example, farmers and rural landowners are obvious stakeholders for agricultural issues. The stakeholder analysis may also identify hunters as stakeholders in agricultural issues, because they often hunt on agricultural land. However, if the agricultural issue is more specific, such as identifying high quality farmlands for farming, hunters may not be the most appropriate group to target. By matching people and issues, the stakeholder analysis helps make the best use of valuable volunteers (Thomas, 1995).

As a general rule, plans are found to be of better quality, are used more often, and stand a better chance of being implemented when a broad set of stakeholders are involved

### Public Officials and Professional Technical Staff

It is useful to list the officials and professionals who contribute to planning in the PPP, so both planning partners and the public know who the responsible parties are and how to contact them. Including contact information demonstrates that professionals and officials are accountable for keeping the public informed and engaged in planning. Identifying roles and responsibilities also makes clear who it is that is responsible for

completing various tasks (see Box 4 and Worksheets 3 & 4).

#### Box 4. Professionals and Officials Involved in Planning and Participation

**Plan Commission:** Appointed or elected members are authorized to prepare a comprehensive plan and recommend the plan's adoption to the governing body. Commissions do not have authority to adopt plans, but they often sponsor a plan process, put public participation efforts in motion, and ensure proper representation of local stakeholder groups.

**Ad Hoc Citizen Advisory Committee:** The advisory committee can also sponsor a plan process. However, the plan commission still has the legal responsibility to review and recommend any plan brought by the committee. Committees are more often used to gather information on a specific area of planning, such as natural resources. Committees can expand the technical capacity and expertise of the commission.

**Village/Town/County Board, City Council:** The elected governing bodies of general-purpose local units of government or their chief presiding officers are responsible for appointing plan commissioners or committee members and ultimately for adopting local plans and implementation measures. Elected officials provide leadership for a fair, open plan process, one that recognizes public and private interests, and seeks to balance various community needs, such as development and conservation.

**UW-Extension:** UWEX provides education and leadership on an array of topics – natural resources, economic development, productive agriculture, and much more. The county-based Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development educator (CNRD) has skills for enhancing public participation in planning, such as instructing, information gathering, and facilitating. UWEX is also home to Basin and Agricultural educators as well as other specialists.

**Planning & Zoning Staff:** In places with planning and zoning departments, staff typically help organize planning and participation efforts. They compile information, draft plans, and facilitate participation throughout a plan process. Some departments, though fully capable of providing planning services, elect to hire consultants to perform these tasks. Since staff often live in the places where they plan and have an intimate connection with their community, they are well suited to provide a leadership role in public participation and planning efforts.

**Planning Consultant:** Planning consultants can be hired to provide a full range of technical planning and public participation products and services. Consultants are often hired to gather information, provide analyses and maps, and write plans, but they also facilitate meetings and conduct participation exercises.

**Clerks/Administrators:** The clerk at the town or village levels, or planning/zoning staff in larger municipalities and counties, often help ensure that proper procedures are followed, such as sending out notices in the local paper.



## Methods Cornerstone – Define How the Public Will Be Involved

The Methods Cornerstone of the PPP identifies specific methods for involving the public to achieve tasks. Participation methods only differ from other planning tools in that they involve the public to achieve tasks. For example, employing geographical information systems (GIS) tools and soils data can help planners identify productive areas to grow crops. A workshop, which is a participation method used to elicit ideas from participants, could instead invite local farmers to identify locally productive agricultural areas. Both methods achieve the planning task by identifying productive agricultural areas; however, the participation

method also builds public ownership and acceptance of final decisions. Many public participation methods, such as those included in Box 5 (pages 16-17), are available to help engage the public in planning.

*Use Worksheet 5 (see Appendix A) to help complete the Methods Cornerstone.*

### Selecting Appropriate Methods

The PPP should identify and describe methods most appropriate for achieving a task and engaging the public. Selecting appropriate methods is a matter of weighing methods for their ability to effectively and efficiently achieve a task and equitably engage the public. Worksheet five is designed to help select the best participation methods for a local PPP.



Clockwise from left:

An Ashland County resident prioritizes important issues by placing dots next to issue statements.

A member of the Ashland County board considers information on a map presented at a local focus group.

ACLUE Land Use Specialist provides education on land planning before a local committee.

Students from Waupaca High School are engaged in local planning.



## Sidebar 2. Incentives, Technology, and Other Unique Methods

Oftentimes, traditional participation methods are not enough to entice the public to participate. For example, the public is all too often inundated with the typical opinion survey and may ignore the one you send. Also, many members of the public cannot or do not attend typical participation venues due to barriers that restrict their involvement, such as work schedules or disabilities. Unique methods, incentives, and technology can help to get the public out to participate.

**Technology:** In today's age, many members of the public are quite savvy computer and Internet users. Many communities are employing Websites to keep the public informed and educated about planning. Other communities employ Geographical Information Systems to engage the public. Some GIS tools are now specifically developed in user friendly formats to help engage the public more intimately in planning and decision-making.



Results in real time. Citizens create their future land use map and receive feedback by touching the interactive TV-like surface.

**Incentives:** Material incentives are sometimes needed to reward participation. A common incentive for example, is to provide food or beverages at planning meetings. One method employed in Bayfield and Dane Counties, provided participants with free maps. Participants could collect the maps and get better informed at the same time.

**Unique Methods:** Sometimes the PPP must go the extra mile to get the public to attend. Methods, unique to local circumstances must be used. In Waupaca County, one method employed was to provide restaurants and taverns with placemats inked with information about the planning process. Before a patron is served their food or drink, they can take the opportunity to read the planning placemat.

## Box 5. Public Participation Methods Shortlist

### Awareness and Education Methods:

Public participation methods designed to increase the public's awareness of planning and participation activities and build their capacity to become further involved.

**Public Notice:** the minimum legal requirement necessary to advertise opportunities for public participation. Notice is usually posted in public places and newspapers.

**Displays and exhibits:** maps, pictures and text arranged in a poster style and posted in high traffic public places or during meetings to share information with the general public.

**Direct mail:** a method to build awareness by mass mailing written materials. Direct mailings work best when the message is simple and an audience is easily identifiable.

**Community Calendar:** a typical calendar filled with important meeting dates, information about the planning process, and pictures or photos submitted by area students and adults.

**Newsletter:** provides the public with a regular source of information that can be reviewed at their leisure. Newsletters may be distributed at various planning stages to keep the public informed and educated throughout the planning project.

**Public Education Meeting:** incorporate educational programs, such as seminars

and presentations or simulations and informal discussions to improve citizens' understanding of a planning issue or task. Public educational meetings build citizens' capacity to participate more effectively.

**Websites:** The Internet is a tool to share information with the general public and stakeholders. Maps, reports, meeting agendas and minutes, contact information, and many other types of information can be served on the Web. The Internet also supports interactive participation, such as on-line voting, planning chat-rooms, and Internet map serving that can be used to create planning maps at home.

**Media Liaisons:** Members from the media are invited to participate as non-voting members on area planning committees. This way planning would be consistently and accurately covered in the local newspapers and radio stations.

### Input Methods:

Methods designed to gather public opinions and expertise.

**Open house:** an informal setting using displays, handouts and other materials designed to expose citizens to planning information and ideas. It provides citizens a chance to react and express feedback about planning information in oral or written form.

**Public hearing:** the minimum legal requirement for public participation is an

official meeting used to present technical information and obtain formal review and approval of proposals. The hearing consists of 1) a summary of why the project is being done, 2) the alternative solutions identified, 3) an assessment of the consequences and impacts of each solution, and 4) reactions to the proposed course of action. An official, permanent record of the public hearing is established.

**Visual preference survey:** asks citizens to identify 3-D rendering or actual photographs of design alternatives or landscapes they prefer or find appropriate. This method is used to identify visual preferences common to the community.

**Opinion surveys:** questionnaire used to systematically collect data or viewpoints from many people. Data is relatively easy to obtain, but difficult to analyze and interpret. Sample must be chosen carefully to represent appropriate population. Questions should be simple, jargon-free and brief.

**Focus groups:** a small group of people (usually 6-12) responsible for identifying issues, concerns, values, beliefs or information related to a particular issue. Participants often are selected based on their knowledge of a particular subject. Focus groups require a skilled facilitator and vocal participants.

**Visioning:** Citizens are asked to develop a vision that reflects community values and depicts what they want the future to look like using text, speech, images, or a combination.

**Cognitive Mapping:** Cognitive mapping measures participants' spatial perceptions or preferences. Using a GIS, individual results are compiled into a single composite map that helps decision-makers interpret shared public preferences. For example, citizens may draw on a basemap (digital or hardcopy) to identify areas they travel most often, perceive to be dangerous or pleasant, or prefer to see preserved or developed.

### Decision-Making Methods:

Methods meant to involve the public to share decision-making responsibilities.

**Citizen Advisory Committee:** (see Box 4)

**Plan Commission:** (see Box 4)

**Referenda:** Binding referenda involve citizens to make policy decisions by majority vote. Non-binding or advisory referenda use citizens' votes to advise local government leaders on a policy decision.

**Interactive GIS:** A GIS equipped with land information, such as parcels, land cover, roads, and surface water, among others can address many questions concerning planning. For example, a commissioner may ask, "How much undeveloped land exists next to our rivers and lakes." The GIS, plus parcel and surface water data, can find undeveloped parcels next to rivers and lakes in 'real-time' to enhance decision-making at public meetings.



### A Combination of Methods

Often, no single method can achieve a planning task alone or engage all stakeholders equally – a number of methods must be implemented together instead (Sanoff, 2000). For example, a planning Website may be a great tool to disseminate information, but not all members of the public have access. Other methods, used in addition to the Website, such as a newsletter, may better serve the public.

Often, many public participation methods must be used together to successfully complete a participation activity. Awareness, Education, Input, and Decision-making methods used together, may more effectively accomplish participation objectives. In Ashland County, Awareness, Education, and Input methods were used together to identify issues and opportunities for natural resources. First, Awareness methods were used to encourage public attendance. Next, Education methods were employed to help the public better understand natural resource patterns and trends. Finally, the public was

asked to provide Input to identify those natural resource issues or opportunities that were most important to them.

### EVALUATE Evaluation Cornerstone – Document and Evaluate Participation

The PPP should outline a protocol for documenting and evaluating public participation activities and results (Randolph, 2004). Evaluation is the final cornerstone of the PPP and secures meaningful and functional participation. Documenting participation provides evidence of the activity and ensuing results, so the public can see how their involvement has influenced planning. Documentation also provides the information needed to evaluate progress or identify problem areas that must be addressed to achieve effective participation (Howell, et. al.). Worksheet 6 (see Appendix A) will help you craft a general protocol suitable for the Evaluation cornerstone of your local PPP.

A website dedicated to comprehensive planning is available for citizens to keep informed of the local planning process.





### III. INTEGRATE A PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

The final segment of the PPP integrates the Four Cornerstones into a strategy for implementing participation activities. The goal here is to provide instructions for effectively engaging the public to achieve planning tasks. The PPP should integrate a participation strategy for each planning task. Boxes 6 and 7 provide two examples for how

a strategy may be integrated.

*Use Worksheet 7 (see Appendix A) to help integrate the Four Cornerstones into a participation strategy suitable for the local PPP. Use Worksheet 8 (see Appendix A) while implementing participation activities to Document and Evaluate results.*

#### Box 6. Participation Strategy - Example 1



**1) Purpose Cornerstone – What must be achieved and when?**

Planning Task – Collect data and verify its accuracy. March 2005.



**2) People Cornerstone – Who is involved to collect and verify data?**

- A. Consultant – Collects and analyzes data.
- B. Land Information Office – Maintains and updates data records.
- C. Interested Citizens – Helps to ground truth data attributes for accuracy.



**3) Methods Cornerstone – How will citizens be involved to verify data for accuracy?**

Awareness –

- A. (General Awareness) Encourage participation using general awareness methods (e.g., public meeting notices etc.)
- B. (Personal Recruitment) Consultant will recruit volunteer citizens at local meetings.

Education –

- A. (Education Meeting) Provide instructions and techniques to citizen volunteers for finding errors and updating data.

Decision-making –

- A. (Homework Assignment) Volunteers are given maps and instructions to find and update data errors prior to the next meeting. Results are mailed to the land information office for database maintenance.



**4) Evaluation Cornerstone – Documentation and evaluation procedures.**

Use Worksheet 6 to assess participation activities. Post worksheet internally to local planning officials. Assess if strategy was successful or establish new strategy.

Post results of participation activities in a report to local officials and on-line for public consumption.

## Box 7. Participation Strategy - Example 2

### PURPOSE

- 1) Purpose Cornerstone – What must be achieved and when?  
Planning Task – Set goals and objectives for natural resources. September 2005.

### PEOPLE

- 2) People Cornerstone – Who is involved to set goals and objectives?
  - A. UWEX – Identify and invite targeted stakeholders. Facilitate participation exercises.
  - B. Consultant – Provide UWEX facilitation support.
  - C. Plan Committee – Develop goals and measurable objectives.
  - D. Targeted Stakeholders – Provide input to plan committee to create realistic and reflective goal and objective statements.
    1. Large landowners
    2. Landowners near surface waters, wetlands, or forests
    3. Outdoor enthusiasts
    4. Farmers
  - E. General public – Encourage attendance of general public.

### METHODS

- 3) Methods Cornerstone – How will citizens be involved to verify data for accuracy?
  - Awareness –
    - A. (General Awareness) Encourage participation using general awareness methods (e.g., public meeting notices etc.)
    - B. (Mailings) UWEX will send letters and correspond with targeted stakeholders.
  - Education –
    - A. (Education Meeting) Provide instructions how to define goals and measurable objectives.
    - B. (Public Education) Presentations on natural resource patterns and trends.
  - Input –
    - A. (Opinion Survey) Survey responses used to help develop goals and objectives.
    - B. (Focus Group) Stakeholder input on natural resource issues used to help develop goals and objectives.
  - Decision-making –
    - A. (Plan Committee) Plan committee will use public and stakeholder input to develop realistic and reflective goals and objectives.
  - Input –
    - A. (Public meeting) Gather citizen input regarding their sentiments toward identified goals and objectives.

### EVALUATE

- 4) Evaluation Cornerstone – Documentation and evaluation procedures.  
Use Worksheet 6 to assess participation activities. Post worksheet internally to local planning officials. Assess if strategy was successful or establish new strategy.

Post results of participation activity in a report to local officials and on-line for public consumption.

### **Eliminate Duplication**

Some participation methods and procedures will strategically be used repeatedly throughout the planning process. Though duplication of methods is useful and necessary for successful planning, it is not necessary that the PPP redefine these general strategies every time they are employed. In these instances, the PPP may describe general strategies once. General awareness methods, such as the public notice, come to mind as methods that are used repeatedly throughout the plan process.

### **More Detail as Needed**

As you begin to implement participation activities you may find it necessary to add more detail. The PPP is a general guide for effective participation, which rarely includes detailed instructions for who is responsible and how exactly to implement participation activities. Be sure that as participation activities draw near, someone on the planning team is responsible for detailing participation activities and ensuring all facilitators have what they need to implement the strategy effectively.

## SUMMARY

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Participation is challenging, but is necessary to help planners make better decisions and a more thoughtful community plan. The Public Participation Plan can make the most effective use of limited public budgets and the public's valuable participation time. The Four Cornerstones provide the framework to pack the PPP with necessary information, so local planning officials can engage the public effectively to reach desired outcomes. The PPP must also include provisions to identify whether public participation is reaching desired goals by documenting and evaluating activities. In summary, participation conducted concurrently to the planning process, with a broad array of relevant stakeholders, using a variety of methods to achieve various tasks, and by evaluating the results, participation can be both functional for planning and meaningful to the public.



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## APPENDIX A: LIST OF WORKSHEETS

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### **Worksheet 1: Establish Planning Tasks**



This worksheet is designed to help complete the *Purpose Cornerstone* of the Public Participation Plan.

### **Worksheet 2: Stakeholder Analysis**



This worksheet is designed to help complete the *People Cornerstone* of the Public Participation Plan by identifying potential stakeholders to target for participation.

### **Worksheet 3: Public Officials Contact List**



This worksheet is designed to help complete the *People Cornerstone* of the Public Participation Plan by identifying public officials involved in planning and participation.

### **Worksheet 4: Professionals and Technical Staff Contact List**



This worksheet is designed to help complete the *People Cornerstone* of the Public Participation Plan by identifying the professionals involved in planning and participation.

### **Worksheet 5: Choosing Participation Methods**



This worksheet is designed to help complete the *Methods Cornerstone* of the Public Participation Plan by helping to identify appropriate methods to achieve tasks and engage the public.

### **Worksheet 6: Documentation and Evaluation Protocol**



This worksheet is designed to help complete the *Evaluation Cornerstone* of the Public Participation Plan.

### **Worksheet 7: Integrating a Participation Strategy**



This worksheet is designed to help integrate a strategy for public participation to achieve individual planning tasks..

### **Worksheet 8: Evaluating Public Participation Activities**



This worksheet is designed to help document and evaluate public participation activities.

Download these worksheets for local government use from the Center for Land Use Education website at [www.uwsp.edu/landcenter/pubs.html](http://www.uwsp.edu/landcenter/pubs.html).

