

# The Importance of Stakeholder Engagement: Overview and Best Practices



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# Stakeholder Engagement (SE)

*“Stakeholders should be involved in decision making because they are in the best position to voice their interests and to negotiate the best decision alternative, considering the relative impacts...alternatives would have on them”*

*(Loker et al., 1998, p.11)*



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# Why Do We Engage Stakeholders?

- Public trust responsibilities



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Colorado State University Extension [Information Sheet 8.004], 2020; Decker et al., 2015; Forstchen & Smith, 2014; Meadow et al., 2005; Pate et al., 1996; Niemiec et al., 2020a; Niemiec et al., 2020b [Report]; Treves et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2002



# Benefits of SE Processes

1. Increased stakeholder support and trust
2. Higher quality decisions
3. Empowered stakeholders
4. Collective problem solving
5. Reduced likelihood stakeholders are marginalized
6. Improvement of adversarial relationships



# SE Best Practices

- Process as goal
- Social goals
- Representative
- Inclusive
- Equitable
- Transparent
- Voice and consideration
- Efficient
- Effective



# SE Best Practices



- Engage early and often
- Two-way communication
- Third party review/oversight
- Consider socio-cultural and socio-political context
- Evaluate “success” of process and outcomes
- Incorporate multiple forms of media and outreach efforts





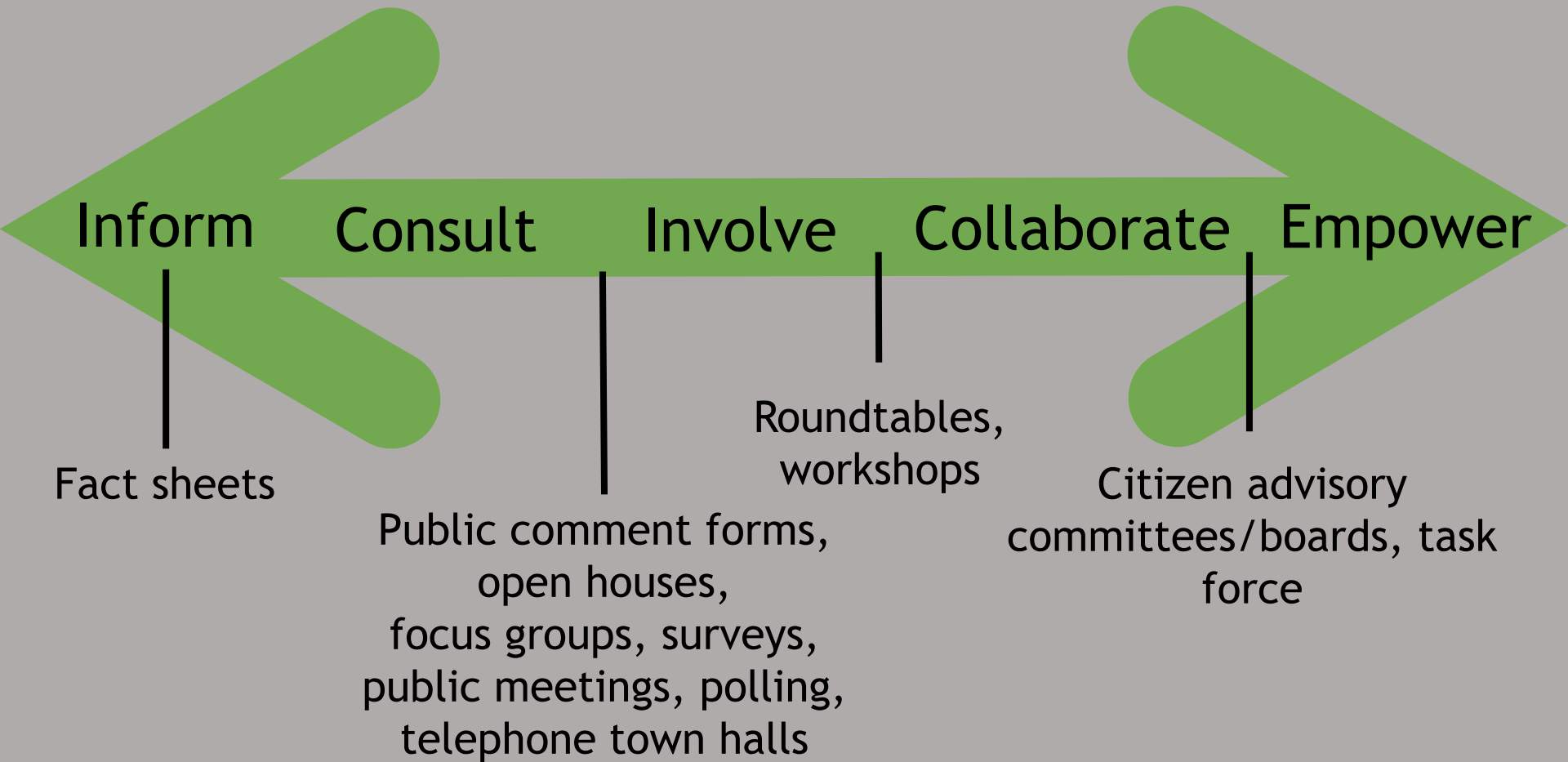
# Approaches & Methods

- Different levels of public involvement serving different purposes



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# Approaches & Methods



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Chase et al., 2004; International Association for Public Participation [online]; Laurian, 2007; Loker et al., 1998; Lord & Cheng, 2006; Hiroyasu et al., 2019; Lauber, 2010; Lute & Gore, 2014; Margerum, 2005; Mortenson & Krannich, 2001; Pomeranz & Decker, 2017; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000



# Barriers to Successful SE

- Lack of interest/awareness
- Perceptions about special interests/politics
- Poor communication
- Shortages of funding, time, and other administrative resources
- Distrust among stakeholder groups



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# Unintended Consequences

- Failed biological/ecological goals
  - Heberlein, 2004
  - Serenari et al., 2018
- Disrespect and decreased trust
  - Vernon & Clark, 2016
- Intentional derailment
  - Walker & Hurley, 2004



# Experiences From Western States

- Engage stakeholder interests early
  - Advisory groups
    - Commitment to larger goal
  - External facilitation
  - Ground rules
- Build trust
  - Thorough communication
  - Open and transparent process



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# Experiences From Western States

- Public input
  - Use social science strategies
  - Provide multiple opportunities and forums for public to provide input
  - Share information
- Community engagement
  - Relationships



Scripps Media, Inc.



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# Commonalities from SE Literature

- No one size fits all approach
- Mutually agreed upon goals
- Context matters
- Tools serve a purpose and should be matched with goals/objectives
- Communication and transparency are critical
- Best practices akin to good governance
  - Concepts associated with fairness, equity, representation, etc.



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# Questions/Comments



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