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Opening Connector

2, 4, All

- Share your name, your Maine hometown
- A few hats you wear in your community
- When you hear the term public engagement, what does that mean to you? What does public engagement look like in your community? In your work?

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Agenda

Welcome, opening connector, overview
 What is public engagement?
 What does public engagement look like?

Brief break

Community conversation in action
 Unpacking civility
 Reflection on public engagement in your community
 Closing by noon

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Goals

- To better understand public engagement and the need for public engagement in improving communities and Main Street efforts
- To introduce the power of dialogue and the role of the facilitator in public engagement in the context of improving communities
- To address and unpack civility and creating community conversations in a constructive, productive manner

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What is public engagement?

public engagement:

the activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues (Public Agenda)

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What is public engagement?

Engagement is about the relationship between people and the institutions that serve them...



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What is public engagement?

...also it's about the relationships among people.



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We are growing increasingly...

- Polarized and disconnected
- Lonely and isolated
- Volatile and angry

As well as:

- More diverse
- Better educated
- More informed

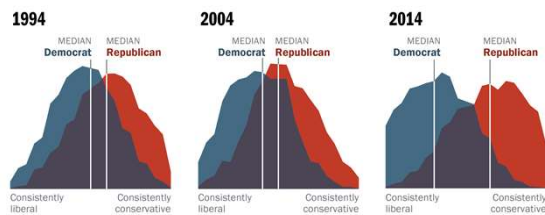


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Democrats and Republicans More Ideologically Divided than in the Past

Distribution of Democrats and Republicans on a 10-item scale of political values



Source: 2014 Political Polarization in the American Public
Notes: Ideological consistency based on a scale of 10 political values questions (see Appendix A). The blue area in this chart represents the ideological distribution of Democrats; the red area of Republicans. The overlap of these two distributions is shaded purple. Republicans include Republican-leaning independents; Democrats include Democratic-leaning independents (see Appendix B).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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Programs and resources to bring people together:




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Discussion guides:



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Organizations and resources:



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Maine Network of Engaged Communities

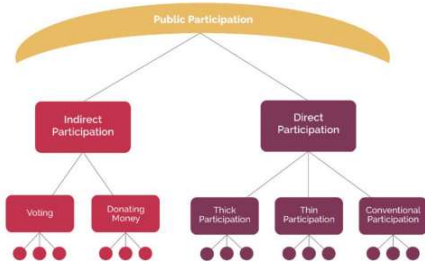


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Types of Engagement

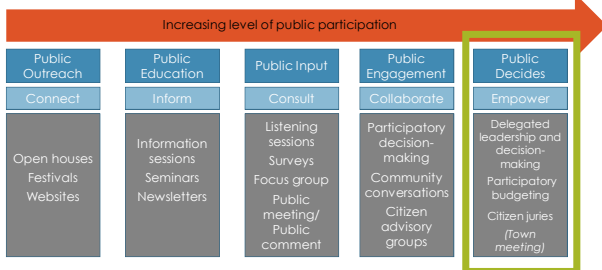


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Forms of public participation – Leighninger and Nabatchi, 2015 14

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Spectrum of engagement



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Spectrum of engagement activity

- Think about a most recent project
- Create a group of 4 or 5 with others around you
- Share your meeting or project and how you define the type of engagement involved
- Did the engagement approach match the goal of the work?
- Was there an opportunity to do something differently?

(10 min in group)

A few pop-ups...

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Questions?
Check in

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A Community Conversation Story

- 2015 opioid crisis getting attention in rural communities
- Concern, worry, fear, misinformation, othering
- Berlin Police Department approached the City
- Invite stakeholders for framing meeting – City, school, hospital, EMS, mental health, social services



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A Community Conversation Story

- Designed a community conversation focused on education and collaboration with the community
- Shared accurate information about substance misuse disorders
- Provided opportunity for everyone to speak and share their priorities about prevention, treatment, and recovery

over 200 community members
showed up!

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A Community Conversation Story

- Summary report created an action plan
- Local coalition (many of the original stakeholders) was formed and continues now
- "(It) gets people talking...in a structured way. So that people can actually talk freely about certain issues in a non-threatening way, and the information can be shared and action can be developed from that. People feel that they have a say...and everyone's ideas are valued because of how the process works." (Superintendent of Schools from project evaluation)

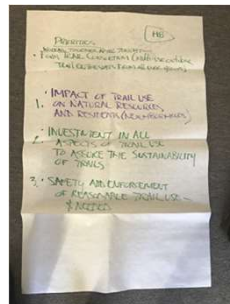
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Role of the facilitator

- Remains neutral, but not neutral on process
- Neutral does not equal passive
- Manage the agenda and guide the process
- Reminds and upholds ground rules
- Listen attentively
- Communicate interest in everyone's perspective
- Help deal with difficult participants
- Summarize and paraphrase (facilitator skills handout)
- Art of note taking



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Community dialogue in action!

- Central framing question – why are we together
- Introductions – take time for meaningful introductions
(we don't have time!)
- Ground rules
- Brainstorm (what's important to you, topics to talk about)
- Central framing question – one or two topics to dig in
- Prepare report out of with any common themes (1 min)

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How can Maine communities be a welcoming place for all?

Share your ideas for how your community can be a great place for all people to live, learn, work, and thrive?

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Debrief dialogue

- What did you notice?
- What worked well?
- How did the role of the facilitator work?
- What feels promising in dialogue as a public engagement practice?
- What was a challenge?
- What feels like a challenge for this type of public engagement?



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When difference makes a difference

- Making sure that all voices are represented in public decisions, especially in areas that affect them ie: youth, historically disadvantaged groups
- Diversity in identity (ex. racial identity), socio-economic, demographic, and lived experience
- How do you encourage, welcome, and plan for difference in your engagement work?

'Nothing about us without us.'

"The only cure for bias is other people."
- Jonathan Haidt

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Civility

In well-structured participation or dialogue:

- Opportunities for participants to speak
- Invitation to use stories and personal experience to explain why they think something
- When we relate to each other, especially face to face, we connect across difference

'I may disagree with you, but I understand this is your experience, your story.'



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Civility



National Institute for Civil Discourse

Turn to a partner:
(1 min. active listening)

What does civility mean to you?
What were you taught about civility?
Who taught you?
What does it look like to you?

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Tyranny of Civility (Arthur Pena, handout)

- Refers to the suppression of unwelcome or discomfort-generating opinions by accusing people of being 'uncivil'
- Accusation of incivility is used to suppress or disengage the content of what people are saying
- Power dynamics
- Both the political right and the political left are sometimes guilty of using the tyranny of civility

Pop-up reflections on your conversations about what civility means to you.

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Closing reflections

In small group tables: **think, pair, share**

- What opportunities are there to include more or different types of public engagement in your community?
- How do you see public engagement strategies helping you, your work, your effort to create strong Maine Downtowns and community?
- What do you need to know more of to advance public engagement in your community?

Large group pop-ups

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Closing connector

In my Maine community, I hope public engagement will ... _____

Fill in the blank (connect us, solve problems, become routine etc)

Standing pop-ups in big group

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Thank you!

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Courtney Wrigley

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