

## The magic number eight....

### We've heard it from participants, seen it in practice & used it ourselves: Why IAP2 needs an 8<sup>th</sup> Core Value.

We started this blog thinking about our work, the practice, the field and comments we've heard from participants. We've been thinking about what makes public engagement really meaningful, and what builds stronger communities, organizations and individual lives.

We believe in IAP2's [7 Core Values](#), and think they are important measures for good practice and process....but we think they are missing a magic number eight. We propose that magic eight be focused on capacity building, and we want to hear your thoughts.

Just as an aside, we've also had a few suggestions that there be a Core Value Number 8 focused on free beer and door prizes. While we think that this is also a worthy suggestion, its time may not have yet come.



#### Why capacity as a Core Value?

Currently IAP2, the International Association of Public Participation embraces 7 Core Values to set the standard for meaningful process and to guide the work of public engagement practitioners.

These Core Values presently cover the right to participate, the possibility to influence the decision, having the information you need to participate, considering the needs and interests of all, inclusive process, involving people in designing the process, and closing the feedback loop.



At Dialogue Partners we embody all of these principles in the work we do but think it is time the values extend further. It has been our experience that people are not born knowing how to talk to each other about “hard” issues in a meaningful, open way and often the state of existing relationships may impact their ability to do so. In order to mitigate this issue, we incorporate capacity building activities into all engagement projects and have seen results showing increased volume and diversity of constructive participant input.

Moreover, capacity building activities increase skills for hosting and convening important conversations and can be completed outside of the formal organization hosted project activities and events. This approach provides a cost-effective,

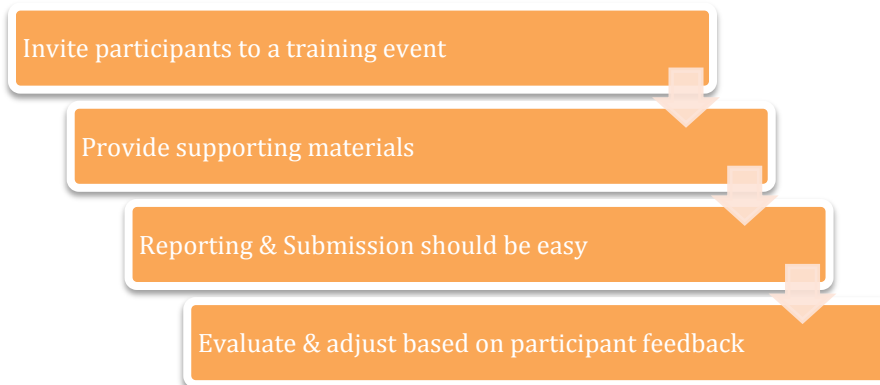
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meaningful way of putting the conversation directly in the hands of participants while serving to further build ownership, connection and relationships. Under this format, the next hard conversation will involve participants who have been engaged in a different way, and will support the capacity of the entire community to talk together on important issues, long after we have been involved.

We thought some examples would help make what we do tangible and provide some food for thought. We want to hear how you address capacity building in your projects and community.

### A few things we've done to build capacity

So you want to try incorporating some capacity building techniques into your next engagement project? We suggest training interested project participants to host their own conversation and reporting the results back to your team. This is a great technique for involving organizations, community associations, individuals or really anyone who might have something to say about the topic under discussion. Here's some quick tips and steps you could follow:



1. **Invite participants to a training event.** During this session you will need to provide participants with some basic skills and knowledge in facilitation and conversation hosting techniques. Your agenda might include items like welcoming attendees, developing ground rules, what to do before the meeting, “how-to’s” of the process, closing the meeting and evaluation. This shouldn’t feel like a boring classroom lecture and needs to be as interactive and fun as possible to ensure future conversation hosts have some practical application of the skills.



2. **Provide supporting materials:** Conversation hosts will need basic project knowledge and an understanding of the engagement process. Don’t

overwhelm them with specifics, as they don't need to be experts but arm them with key milestones and project questions. It may also be helpful to develop a "Conversation Hosting Guide". This document might include things like tips and tools on encouraging participation, making people comfortable, managing differing opinions and conflicts and successful listening and observing skills.

3. **Reporting & Submission should be EASY:** A great conversation is only as good as what gets recorded and submitted so ensure that you develop easy to use reporting tools and mechanisms and identify multiple options for submission including online options to walking over to drop box at a community library.
4. **Evaluate and adjust based on participant feedback:** There is no one better able to evaluate a process than those who experienced it first hand so ensure you provide participants with an opportunity to evaluate your training session and provide input and feedback for future development and modifications.



**Workshop Objectives**

- **To help you learn to host your own conversation.**
- **To learn & practice basic facilitation skills to help ensure as many voices as possible are heard in this important conversation.**
- **To learn more about the public engagement process.**

Bringing people together



**Tip # 3 Preventing and Managing Difference of Opinion and Conflict**

One of the best ways to deal with conflict is to prevent it. However, at meetings with many diverse viewpoints, sometimes it's inevitable. However, diverging opinions can be helpful to the process, and alternate views can be used to highlight options or alternatives that would otherwise not have been considered. Remember that not everyone has to agree at a meeting, but everyone should be heard.

- Post the Ground Rules – Agreement on the ground rules can make the facilitator's job easier when disagreement arises.
- Search for agreement – To create an atmosphere of cooperation, draw attention to the key points where there is agreement.
- Agree to disagree - Discussions on controversial issues often result in differing viewpoints. Urge participants to treat each other with respect, even when they disagree.

### Examples of Dialogue Partners Capacity Building in Action

**City of Calgary: Our City. Our Budget. Our Future**  
**Budget Kit Hosting Workshops** were delivered to both citizens and City employees to gain a deeper understanding of the content and process and build their own capacity to participate on a higher level. These workshops taught participants how to host conversations themselves; empowering them to go out and gather input from their friends, families, co-workers and neighbours. This technique allowed participants to make the public engagement project their own, and to reach out to individuals who might be unaware or unable to attend larger events.

*If you would like more information please feel free to contact us at [info@dialoguepartners.ca](mailto:info@dialoguepartners.ca) or visit our website @ [www.dialoguepartners.ca](http://www.dialoguepartners.ca)*

## [Quikiqtani Truth Commission Facilitation and Community Consultation Project](#)

In Quikiqtani Truth Commission Project, we trained community members as facilitators and conversation hosts for community conversations in remote Baffin Island Location, placing the conversation in the hands of those who lived in the communities and who spoke Inuktitut. This increased individual and community capacity and provided meaningful input to the project.

## [Edmonton Public School: Sector Review 2010](#)

**Public Engagement 101 Training and workbook conversation hosting workshops** were hosted to provide information to assist parent councils, community leagues and partner organizations understand the event objectives and process of sector review planning and to share tools and information on how to host a conversation on the issues.

## **The skill testing question**

So now you've heard our thoughts. That the IAP2 Core Values are really great, but to build a different kind of society where people talk to each other in meaningful, respectful, constructive ways on important issues we need a new Core Value. That building communities and organizations takes a commitment to a new kind of conversation – and none of us are born knowing how to do this.



**So tell us....how have you built capacity in your projects?**

**Do you think there needs to be a new Core Value for public engagement? Are you voting for capacity building? Or free beer and door prizes?**

We'd love to hear from you!

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