

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND THE  
IDAHO COMPLETION PROJECT**

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## Introduction and Scope

The U.S. Department of Energy defined public participation in its 1994 policy as:

“...open, ongoing, two-way communication, both formal and informal, between the Department of Energy and stakeholders. This steady, interactive communication enables each party to learn about and better understand the views and positions of the other.” (DOE P 12 10.1, 7/29/94)

It is the intent of the Idaho Completion Project (ICP) to make public participation a fundamental component in program operations, planning activities and decision-making, enabling better, more informed decisions and to allow the decision-makers to view the full spectrum of public values that relate to a particular project.

To be successful, public participation must have the full support of top management. Public involvement should be one of the initial components of any project plan with management recognizing the risks and benefits of the various levels of public involvement before making any decisions.

The ICP's public participation process is values based. The International Association for Public Participation developed the following seven values for public participation. The ICP will base its public involvement program on these values:

1. The public should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. The public participation process communicates the interests and meets the process needs of all participants.
4. The public participation process seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected.
5. The public participation process involves participants in defining how they participate.
6. The public participation process provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. The public participation process communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Public participation includes:

- Deciding appropriate level of public involvement
- Identifying public concerns and issues
- Providing information and opportunities for the public to assist in identifying issues and problems and in formulating and evaluating alternatives
- Considering public concerns and input in decision-making
- Providing feedback on how decisions reflect public input

## **Policy**

The ICP is committed to conducting its programs in an open, responsive, and accountable manner. It is the Laboratory's policy to ensure that stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in those decisions that affect or potentially affect them.

The ICP supports an aggressive, substantive, sitewide public participation program in which the public is provided with early meaningful participation opportunities as appropriate, along with accurate, complete, and timely information that is not prohibited from release by laws and regulations (e.g., classified or unclassified nuclear information and proprietary or Privacy Act data).

The public participation program is the process by which the views and concerns of the public are identified and considered in the decision-making processes. The project is committed to establishing a culture that promotes public participation opportunities as part of day-to-day activities. Additionally, public participation activities will be fully integrated and standardized across projects to avoid duplication of effort, confusion, and wasted resources.

## **Goal and Objectives**

The overall goal of the ICP public participation program is to create an open and accessible decision-making process that results in decisions that reflect public concerns and are:

1. Technically and economically feasible,
2. Environmentally sound,
3. Health and safety conscious,
4. Cost effective, and
5. In compliance with regulatory requirements and commitments.

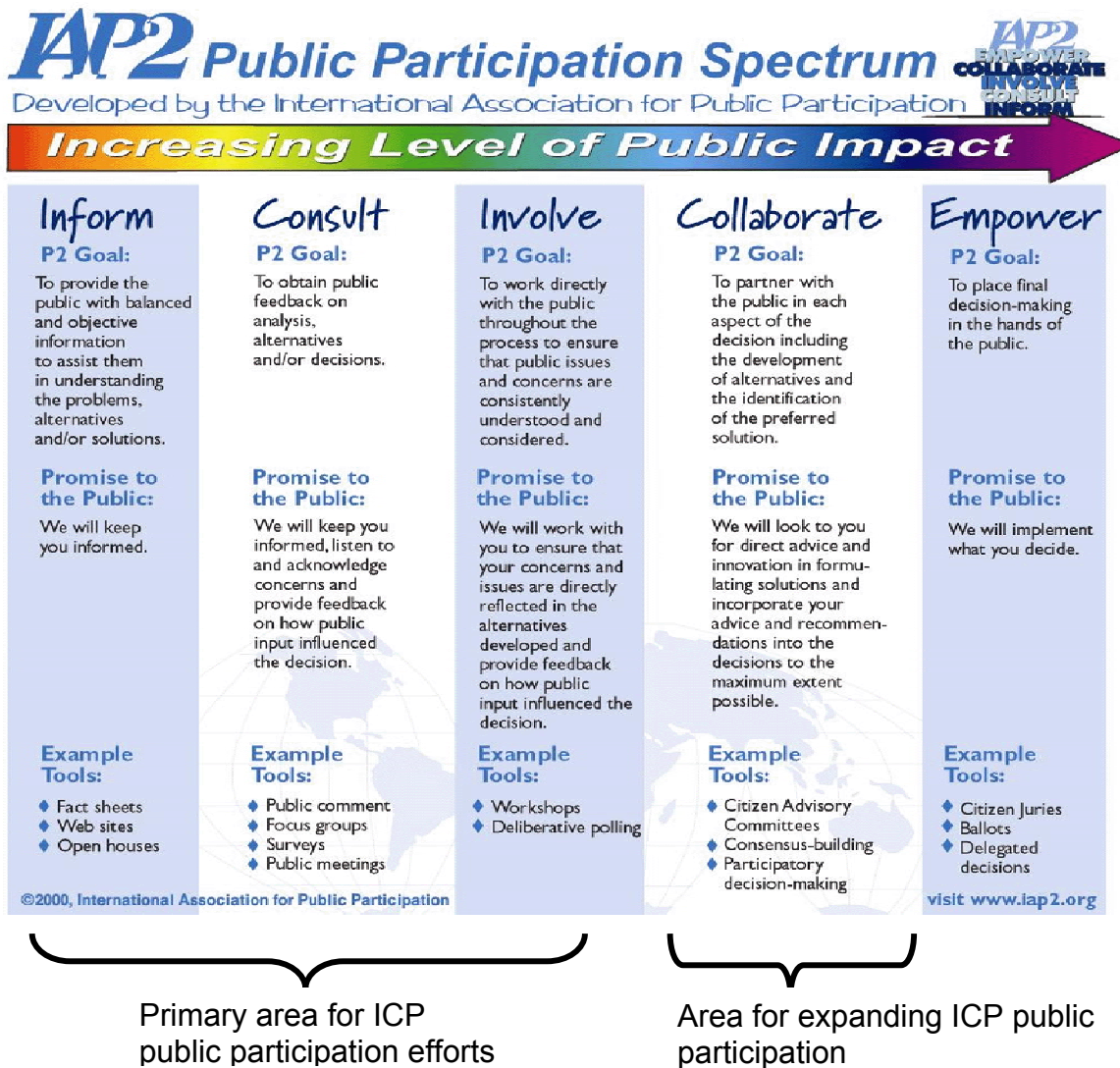
The objectives of the ICP public participation program include:

- Increasing public understanding of the environment in which the ICP operates, including legal, regulatory, political, technical, and budgetary constraints
- Involving the public in identifying ICP-related problems and issues, including alternative approaches
- Involving the public early in the process before preferred decisions are reached internally so that decisions are implemented without costly and time-consuming delays
- Increasing accountability to the public, and building credibility through openness and responsiveness
- Coordinating, integrating, and communicating information about public participation activities, including providing timely feedback on how public input was used in the decision-making process
- Providing varied public participation opportunities that meet the needs and interests of diverse segments of the public, balancing a variety of interests and considerations
- Complying with the letter and spirit of legal, regulatory, negotiated, and policy requirements related to ICP public participation.

# Level of Involvement

The International Association of Public Participation has developed a spectrum detailing the different levels for involving the public (Figure 1). This spectrum starts with informing the public, moves to consulting, involving, and collaborating with them and reaches its highest level of involvement with citizens being empowered to make the decisions. The ICP public participation program, in concert with its Department of Energy customers, will primarily focus on the first three levels of the spectrum for public involvement. The ICP does not have the authority to delegate decision-making power to outside parties. The U.S. Department of Energy, by law, is the ultimate decision-maker on INEEL cleanup matters.

Figure 1: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum



Final policy decisions on cleanup at the INEEL are made at the highest levels of government, either. It is the goal of this plan to inform these key decision makers about the public's concerns and values. The project accepts the decisions it inherits from higher levels and will work with stakeholders to find a meaningful role in implementing those decisions.

The ICP will also look for opportunities within its public involvement process to continually improve and enhance the project's relationship with stakeholders. Where possible, the ICP will seek to expand public participation programs into the collaborative area when feasible.

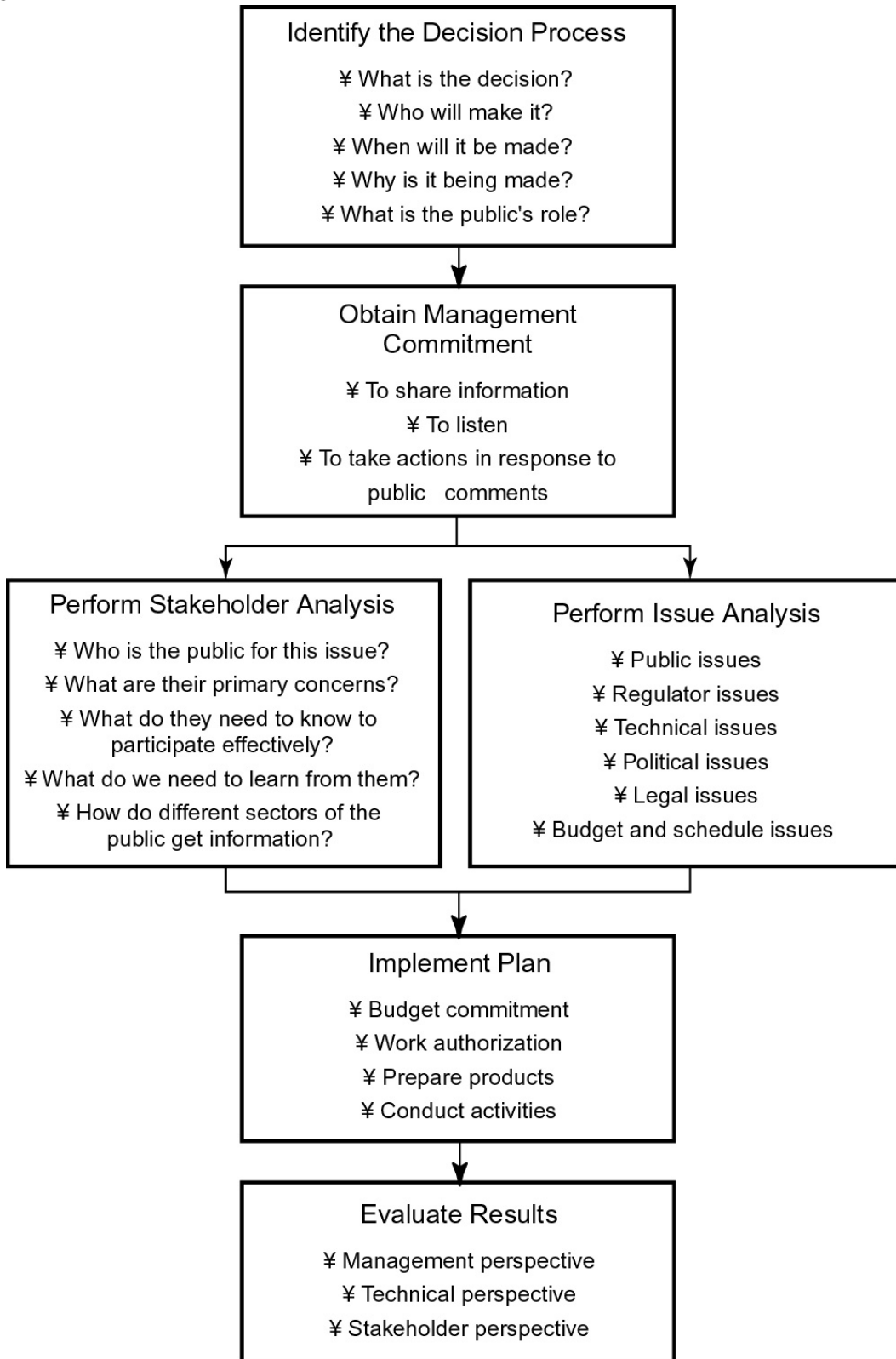
## **Implementation**

In concert with the DOE-Idaho Office of Communications and the appropriate ICP project director, communications staff assigned responsibility for public involvement will identify programs, decisions and actions within their organization that require public involvement. When such opportunities are identified, the following actions will be taken to ensure appropriate planning for public involvement.

1. Identify the decision(s) requiring action and identify decision points, decision-makers, and opportunities for public involvement in predecisional analysis and evaluation.
2. Obtain management agreement on the role of the public in the decision-making process. This includes a commitment to involve stakeholders, listen to them, and incorporate their comments into decisions.
3. Perform stakeholder analysis to identify all audiences who desire or deserve involvement in project decisions. This analysis should include an assessment of stakeholder issues and concerns, levels of knowledge and whether each audience has sufficient information to adequately participate in the decision process.
4. Prepare a public involvement action plan for each major project or decision. The plan will identify activities necessary to inform and engage stakeholders and obtain their input.
5. Obtain management commitment to implement and funding for the action plan. During implementation, the plan should be revised as needed to reflect changes in circumstances or changes in decision-making process.
6. At the close of the program, evaluate its effectiveness with management, technical staff and stakeholders.

This process is illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2.



## **Measuring Success**

A proactive public participation program will not eliminate the conflicts and controversies that a DOE action inspires. However, a well-designed and implemented public participation program provides the forum for anticipating and resolving community concerns before the opportunity for constructive resolution is lost.

Even the most carefully planned public participation program cannot guarantee that a project will gain the wholehearted approval of the community. Sometimes the best that a public participation program can produce is an acceptance by the community that the DOE activity under consideration has factored community concerns into the project to the greatest extent possible.

At the end of each program where the public has been involved, the public participation program itself will be evaluated. The project will use feedback gathered at public forums, information from public opinion surveys, newspaper clippings, etc., to assess the effectiveness of its public participation program. Interviews will also be conducted with management, technical staff and stakeholders to evaluate their views of the effectiveness of public participation activities. Lessons learned will be applied to future projects.