

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Act 46 Implementation Project

Goal: To support the study committee by outlining the phases of community engagement involved in bringing a merger plan to the electorate for a vote. The objective is to educate the electorate on the data, the process, and the vision for merger, provide a forum for feedback, and present the ultimate plan.

Four Phases:

- I. Educate and engage
 - Rationale for the bill
 - Requirements of the bill and likely outcome
 - Opportunities within the bill
 - The bill and the SU (get specific)

Suggested Tools:

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
<i>Op-Ed</i>	Reaches out to a broad group; beyond the “usual suspects” Maintains maximum control of information Media exposure	Media exposure
<i>Online supports</i>	Can be used to recruit participants and coordinate organizers Can disseminate deliberation materials for use beyond formal community meetings and allows for more educated follow-up	Requires technical assistance (We can help!) Requires ongoing follow-up Requires a community that actively seeks information Due to open meeting laws, cannot have forum.
<i>Board Meetings</i>	Can be videotaped and posted on website.	Due to open meeting laws, cannot have forum.

- II. Sharing of analysis
 - Equity and quality and cost—
 - What will happen if we do nothing
 - What are our opportunities
 - Options under consideration

Suggested Tools:

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
<i>Online Supports</i>	Can disseminate deliberation materials for use beyond formal community meetings and allows for more educated forum follow-up Provides opportunity for public validation and digestion of complicated information	Requires technical assistance Requires ongoing follow-up
<i>Community Meetings</i>	Provides for immediate legitimization of information Opportunity to respond to questions immediately	Requires expertise to do well Less control over information Tends to reach only the “usual suspects”
<i>Focus Groups</i>	Efficient way to gain input Maintains maximum control of information	Less effective than other strategies for legitimizing plans Requires money and expertise to do well

III. Sharing of the plan/Receive public input

- Share plan
- Questions, comments, suggestions to improve the plan

Suggested Tools:

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
<i>Stakeholder Dialogue</i>	Targets key groups Relatively inexpensive Requires minimal special expertise, technical assistance	Time-consuming Limited impact on community overall Can be politically tricky to include some stakeholders and not others
<i>Community Forums</i>	Engages the most people Generates new ideas Raises general awareness through direct contact, word-of-mouth, and media attention	Labor-intensive Requires significant planning and lead time Requires ongoing follow-up
<i>Online Supports</i>	Can disseminate deliberation materials for use beyond formal community meetings. Provides opportunity for public validation and digestion of complicated information	Requires technical assistance Requires ongoing follow-up
<i>Op-Ed</i>	Reaches out to a broad group; beyond the “usual suspects” Maintains maximum control of information Media exposure	Media exposure

- IV. Presentation of the plan
- Inform!

Suggested Tools

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
<i>Media Coverage</i>	Engages the most people Raises general awareness	Less control over information
<i>Community Meetings</i>	Opportunity to respond to questions	Suggests that the plan is still in formation

The consultant should empower the committee to develop a communications plan. Members of the study committee should be clearly assigned individual responsibility for each activity in the plan, as well as specific vehicles (Front Porch Forum, Facebook, Op-Ed, etc) and the specific audiences to reach.