

The question of participation: Toward authentic public participation in publ...

Cheryl Simrell King; Kathryn M Feltey; Bridget O'Neill Susel
Public Administration Review; Jul/Aug 1998; 58, 4; ABI/INFORM Global
 pg. 317

Table 2
Overcoming Barriers to Authentic Participation: Recommendations for Practice

Barriers	Objectives		
	Empowering and Educating Citizens	Re-educating Administrators	Enabling Administrative Systems and Processes
Realities of Daily Life	<p>Talk with administrators; establish one-on-one relationships.</p> <p>Pay attention.</p> <p>Talk to neighbors; form relationships with others in your area (interest or geographical).</p> <p>Strengthen local economies, emphasizing benefits to people versus the economy.</p> <p>Create opportunities for people to interact with each other.</p>	<p>Take initiative to talk with citizens; establish one-on-one relationships. Go out and get democracy.</p> <p>Don't separate yourself from your job; you are a citizen also. Think about your life and plan participation efforts accordingly.</p> <p>Be sure that projects are advertised so that people are informed (flyers in well-attended places, phone calls, mailings, etc.).</p>	<p>Set up flexible meeting schedules; multiple opportunities.</p> <p>Go to where people are (lunch hour, child care centers, schools, churches, laundry facilities, electronic, etc.).</p> <p>Use electronic resources (but don't rely only upon them).</p> <p>Provide on-site, free child-care; catered meals at a nominal charge for participants, free meals for disadvantaged participants.</p> <p>Seek diversity in representation.</p>
Administrative Systems and Processes	<p>Teach citizens how to work within the system and to work with the system.</p> <p>Head off antigovernment sentiment by educating citizens about the necessity of government practices (red tape, etc), assuming this is done in a good-faith effort to find ways to work more effectively with citizens.</p> <p>Place more emphasis on civics and public participation in K-12 (add to 3Rs) as well as in higher education. Educate to participate.</p>	<p>Begin to see citizenry as the fourth branch of government; one can't talk about governance and government without talking about citizens.</p> <p>Shift from majority focus of education on managerial skills to governance skills.</p> <p>Require continuing education credits for administrators that focus on innovations in practice.</p>	<p>Allocate resources for participation efforts.</p> <p>Reward administrators for participation efforts; change job descriptions; participation must be integral to job, not an add-on.</p> <p>Bring people in before agenda is set; create on-going project teams that follow project through to completion.</p> <p>Shift from emphasis on managerial roles of administration to governance roles.</p>
Participation Techniques	<p>Hold workshops with administrators that focus upon discourse skills, meeting skills, and research and statistics skills.</p> <p>Hold workshop and training opportunities with administrators prior to beginning project team work.</p>	<p>Infuse Master of Public Administration and undergrad curricula with training in the skills below; develop on-site training funded by agencies and local governments:</p> <p>facilitation skills; team-building skills; organizational development skills; discourse skills; interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Require these curriculum changes as part of NASPAA accreditation requirements.</p>	<p>Change the way we meet and interact with each other and with citizens:</p> <p>many small meetings; roundtable discussions; outside facilitators; equal participants; no one privileged in group because of position, status, demographic characteristics, etc..</p> <p>Avoid one-shot techniques like surveys or biased techniques like boards or panels.</p>