**Selecting The Best Model For Your Meeting**

When it comes to selecting a model, it is not one size fits all. It is truly, as ABA President Linda M. Klein has said, “one size fits one.”

There are many different models for hosting community forums, and many different processes that are intended to create dialogue across different organizations and perspectives. See, e.g., [http://ncdd.org/rc/item/category/dd-methods](http://ncdd.org/rc/item/category/dd-methods). You should consider which model is best for you and your community, as you develop a program.

The type of meeting, its timing, and its level of formality are determined by its purpose in the overall public involvement effort. An effective strategy tailors the style of meeting to the purpose of the meeting and the target audience or types of stakeholder groups to be included.

You should make sure that you have a good idea of your intended mission in hosting the meeting and the objectives you seek to accomplish, before selecting the process that you feel might work best for you. Different kinds of meetings or processes are better suited to certain goals.

Here are some examples of the kinds of different goals that might call for different processes:

1. to inform your audience about an issue;
2. to consult with your audience to obtain feedback on alternatives or a decision;
3. to involve your audience directly in a process to ensure that public issues or concerns are understood by decision makers;
4. to collaborate with your audience about the issue, to develop alternatives or identify preferred solutions; or
5. to empower or place final decision-making into the hands of your audience.

There is a surprisingly broad “spectrum” of models for programs seeking public participation in any issue and the efficacy of any model depends largely on what your goal is. See [http://www.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/IAP_Public_Participation_Spectrum.pdf](http://www.fgcu.edu/Provost/files/IAP_Public_Participation_Spectrum.pdf). Also, in developing a process intended to involve the public, or a variety of stakeholders offering different perspectives on an issue, you should be aware you are making implicit “promises” to your audience. So your choice of a process can really matter.

Around the country, a growing number of university-based entities provide consultation, convening, facilitation, training and process design services and are available for consultation on this question. See, e.g., [http://ktd.ngpvanhost.com/directory](http://ktd.ngpvanhost.com/directory).