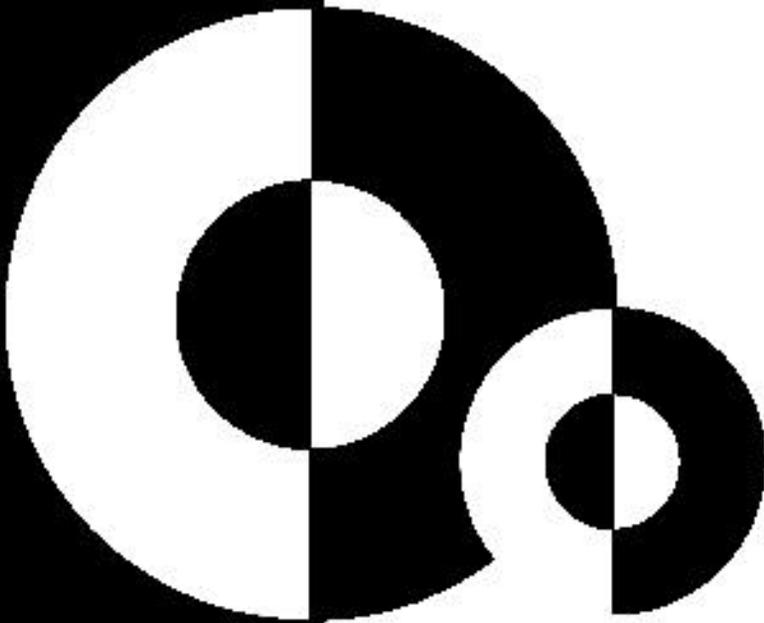


public issues
education

Increasing competence
in resolving public issues



National Public Policy Education Committee
Cooperative Extension
Public Issues Education Materials Task Force—1994

public issues
education

Increasing competence
in resolving public issues

edited by Duane D. Dale and Alan J. Hahn

Use the following citation when referring to this publication:

Public Issues Education: Increasing Competence in Resolving Public Issues. Dale, D. D. and Hahn, A. J. (eds.). Public Issues Education Materials Task Force of the National Public Policy Education Committee and PLC and PODC subcommittees of the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Extension, 1994.

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Preface

This book is designed as a guide for people who want to initiate the process of exploring public issues. You may be an elected official, a member of an advocacy group or a neutral educational organization, a private citizen eager to see an issue handled more satisfactorily, or an Extension educator who wants to make a contribution.

Increasing Competence in Resolving Public Issues supplements previous Cooperative Extension publications such as *Working With Our Publics Module 6: Education for Public Decisions* and *Public Issues Education: A Handbook*. Like the recent videoconferences on public issues education, it is part of a system-wide emphasis on enhancing the way Extension helps society deal with controversial issues and public choices.

This book should help you:

- See your issue in the broader context of public problem solving.
- Select the best role for you.
- Size up the contribution an educational approach could make.
- Decide how to get started.
- Incorporate the latest thinking about collaboration, problem solving, dispute resolution, and other methodologies.
- Help your community move toward a shared understanding of the issue and the process.
- Identify resources to support your efforts.
- Assess the impact of these other activities.

Chapter 2 of this publication is titled “Step-by-Step Approaches to Public Issues Education.” It is important—even essential—that people working on a public issue collectively understand the sequence of steps in which they are involved. Chapter 2 is designed to help the public issues educator think about what that sequence should be.

Chapter 3 addresses three topics that are basic to designing successful public issues education programs:

- choosing issues
- identifying participants
- selecting educational methods.

Chapter 4 addresses five special topics that contribute to successful programs:

- creating new structures, such as coalitions
- science and dialogue: blending technical information and process assistance
- collaborative conflict resolution with polarized groups (the interest-based problem solving model)
- public issues educators and the news media
- evaluating public issues education.

It is our sincere hope that this book will help you contribute to public issues and wise public choices.

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How education can help resolve public issues

chapter 1

Two communities

Communities differ in the way they approach problems. Consider the following two examples.

Community 1. This community is beset by tough issues. Water quality is threatened. Jobs are scarce. Schools struggle to maintain quality and control costs; developers tangle with preservationists. New issues seem to appear weekly; old ones don't get resolved and don't go away. And to the residents of this community, the process of addressing issues is exhausting, frustrating, expensive (in time and money), unrewarding and seemingly endless. People don't trust their opponents and don't put much energy into listening or understanding others' viewpoints. Most issues are frozen in gridlock and never reach resolution.

Citizens tune out. They see politics as a continual battle, and even when they *are* concerned about an issue, they don't want to get involved in the fray. Frustrated policy makers see no way to change things. Interest groups fight among themselves. They often succeed in blocking actions they oppose, but rarely do they accomplish positive goals.

Community 2. Now consider another community that faces the same sorts of issues, but conducts its community business in a different way. Local leaders and other citizens keep an ear to the ground for emerging issues—a likely school budget shortfall, the threat of groundwater contamination, a split in community opinion about a proposed development project.

These people identify issues not to keep them quiet, but to open them up for input. Local officials often provide the impetus for investigation of an issue.

Usually they team up with other organizations perceived as neutral; for example, the League of Women Voters, the library, Cooperative Extension and the local community college.

Public forums draw out community concerns and thereby identify issues. Small study groups provide a way for those most concerned to gather information, develop shared understandings and a common mission, and expand the available options. People with different backgrounds and viewpoints are not only invited but actively recruited into the process.

Background information on a range of current local issues is available in a special file in the library, and skill-building sessions are offered several times a year to help those who lack confidence in their ability to contribute. For each issue, one person agrees to serve as process monitor and ombudsperson, hear complaints and try to ensure fairness for everyone.

This community does not lack for strong personalities. Business interests try hard to get issues framed in ways that will benefit them, as do environmentalists and neighborhood groups. But everyone knows they must listen, share facts openly, and talk about what they want and need. People accept the need for openness to more than one possible solution. When differences persist, neutral facilitators or mediators help the parties resolve their differences and move forward.

Public involvement in this community is not always without conflict, and sometimes the process seems to bog down or go into reverse. But usually, public involvement is satisfying. Differences are acknowledged and usually resolved. The

challenge of working through tough issues calls up people's thoughtfulness and creativity. When asked whether the community is a good place to live, a substantial majority answer "yes," and many consider the way the community deals with issues one reason why they feel that way.

The connections people make while they work on an issue don't stop when the issue is resolved. Former adversaries greet each other on the street and talk about common concerns. Citizens know they are bound together with people they like and dislike, agree or disagree with, as part of a vital, ongoing democratic process. They have found that conflict does not prevent people from being civil to one another and that differences can be addressed constructively. People on different sides are not enemies; they disagree on some points but agree on others. Most importantly, each protagonist during the dialogue understands why other people disagree.

The challenge

The first type of community is probably far more common. But the second type *does* exist, and there are many communities where at least some issues are addressed in the more satisfactory mode.

Community may mean a neighborhood, town, city or county; it may also mean the community of people with a common concern who become involved in a particular national policy issue—for example, the farmers, industry representatives, environmentalists, consumer advocates, and others who participate in the agricultural policy process. The process of addressing community issues is rarely without controversy. But through learning, creativity and compromise, that process can be more successful and more satisfying, than it is today.

Is this realistic? Does it make sense from the perspective of businesses, concerned citizens, or others to explore a collaborative approach to issues? What seemed idealistic and unlikely a few years ago has been proven possible by a number of successful cases. Across the country, farmers and environmentalists, corporations and school boards, young people and adults are working together in some surprising collaborations.

What does it take to create a community like the second one—or to move from the first type to the second? In most cases, community leaders make the difference—leaders with a vision and the desire to share it with their fellow citizens. To implement the vision, the community needs a shared process, some basic group skills, and people's willingness to work together. The crucial first step is to help community members grasp the possibility of a new and more satisfactory way to address issues.

Public issues

Public issues are matters of widespread concern that grow out of accumulated daily events. They are reflected in people's casual conversations and in the worries expressed by friends, neighbors, business people and local officials. They are marked by a feeling that there is a gap between *what is* and *what could be*. Public issues involve disagreement and controversy which result from different roles, values, interests and ideas. Some issue areas include:

- agriculture and the environment
- economic development and jobs
- health care
- youth at risk
- food safety and nutrition.

It's common to think of broad topics as "the issues" but it is more accurate to speak of these as "issue areas." Actual issues are more specific and encompass a question about which there is controversy, and a choice between two or more possible actions.

Broad issue area: the environment

Narrower issue: What steps should we take to protect and restore salmon in the Pacific northwest while preserving jobs and economic vitality?

Individual problems become public issues when the actions of an individual or group produce consequences that affect others. Public issues are typically resolved by a group decision process which creates public policies—policies that affect a significant number of people outside the group or organization that decides the policy. Public policies are generally enacted by local, state, or federal governments; yet the policies and actions of private organizations can also yield large-scale, public impacts, such as a corporation's decision to close down a local plant, or a church group's decision to operate a soup kitchen.¹

New ways to address public issues

Because *public* issues affect most or all of us, it's easy to assume that they fall under the domain of government, and that solutions will take the form of laws, regulations, case law (as established by the courts), executive orders, policy statements, treaties, government or government-funded programs. However, there is a growing sense that government alone cannot resolve many of the challenging problems we face today. Budgets may be insufficient or inflexible, or agencies may sidestep responsibility for dealing with the problems.

Joint efforts by private and public interests are taking on more significance as society becomes more complex. Increasingly, the public expects corporations to be responsible for their parts in creating and solving problems.

A new contract for the private sector is being written, this one (between the people and business) is primarily a social rather than economic contract... Just as successful politicians must respond to their constituents, so successful executives must anticipate and respond to the issues and opinions of importance not just to their constituents—their customers, their suppliers, their employees—but to any public that would like to participate in their decision-making.²

Learning is the reorganization of experience...which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience.

—John Dewey¹

The chairman of Atlantic Richfield Oil Company (ARCO), Robert O. Anderson, observed in 1982:

Failure to perform competently and credibly in the realm of public issues can be devastating to the prospects of any business. In fact, it is not stretching fact at all to say that business today has a new bottom line—public acceptance. Without the approval and support of society, it is obvious that financial success is irrelevant.³

Corporations and other organizations respond in various ways to the imperative identified by Anderson, but increasingly, they acknowledge it.

Not-for-profit agencies, interest groups and other citizen-based organizations also sense the need to be involved in public issues. All struggle with the challenge of being responsible community members while representing the needs and interests of their direct stakeholders.

Structured dispute resolution

Involving diverse players in public issues, and even in coalitions, does not eliminate conflict; often, it heightens it.

In the last 20 years, the field of conflict resolution or alternative dispute resolution has expanded rapidly. Especially in the areas of environmental quality and facilities siting, an increasing number of disputes are handled by a structured process which usually involves an individual or team functioning as mediator or facilitator. Negotiated settlements provide an alternative to lengthy and expensive legal proceedings, and they sometimes produce extremely innovative solutions.

Public issues education

Learning is a cornerstone of any society's ability to address public issues. On their own initiative, individuals undertake much of the learning about issues, without help or intervention from "educators." Acquiring information, developing skills, building capacity, and gaining new insights happen inevitably as part of the process of exploring issues.

Though learning always requires individual commitment and responsibility, there is an advantage to having someone make those steps explicit. If you accept the challenge of becoming a public issues educator, your role will be to find ways to enhance the natural, self-directed learning process.

Public issues education programs are intended to enhance society's capacity to understand and address issues. Usually, such education is not conducted formally in the classroom. Rather, it is a learn-as-you-go approach that utilizes a problem-solving format and emphasizes sharing information, skills and insights.

As many public groups and private corporations find, learning on the job is often the most effective way to learn because people help each other. Everyone is a potential teacher as well as a potential learner.

Public issues educators

As a public issues educator, your job is to plan and help carry out learning activities related to public issues. You may be linked to an organization such as Cooperative Extension, the League of Women Voters or the National Issues Forums, or you may be an individual who is concerned with improving the way issues are addressed. The functions of a public issues educator differ from those of a classroom teacher and may be filled by several different types of people.

A public issues educator's roles or functions may include being:

- a *convener*, who calls a group together for mutual learning, skill building, or collaborative problem solving.
- a *program planner*, who attends to the design of learning activities and the way they mesh with planning, problem solving, and decision making.
- a *facilitator*, who leads a group through a process of learning, information sharing, and problem-solving.
- an *information provider*, who identifies relevant information and delivers via lecture, print, or electronic means.

- **an adviser/analyst**, who gathers and interprets relevant information, and participates actively in identifying alternatives and anticipating consequences.
- **a forecaster**, who analyzes emerging issues to help a group begin to address issues as early as possible.

It is rare to find one person who can perform all the necessary work. It helps, therefore, to think in terms of a small team. A minimal team might include a convener and a facilitator. A larger team might include all the functions, or might add several people who serve as information providers. Often these people will not all be identified in advance. For example, as information needs become clear, it becomes apparent that certain information providers are required. One consequence: The person who recognizes the need to incorporate a learning component into an issue resolution process need not assume all the responsibility for public issues education. That person may be the convener or initiator of public issues education, and may involve others in facilitation, information provision, or advising. When a group or community grasps the significance of an educational or learning approach, the role of program planner may become a shared function, and the search for information providers will be an integral part of the collaborative process.

Neutrals and advocates

In almost every community, there are some who look beyond current issues and put their emphasis on promoting understanding through high-quality public discourse. These are the people concerned about preparing the community's future leaders. They are also concerned about nurturing a community-wide capacity to address issues. Such people may hold elected or appointed public positions or belong to an organization. They are committed to building the know-how to solve problems and seize opportunities.

There are also community leaders who have strong positions on their community's issues. Their public role involves promoting their own point of view, their own way of framing the problem, and their own set of solutions. Their priority is advocacy, but they also see the need to function in a context of learning and dialogue.

This publication can help both types of leaders—those whose top priority is to enhance their community's ability to address issues and those who advocate a certain position but recognize the need for an educational framework.

For Cooperative Extension educators

Public issues education is an approach that evolved within Cooperative Extension in the early 1990s. It builds on several key elements of the Extension tradition, some initiated 50 years ago. These include public policy education, public affairs programming, leadership development, community development and organizational development.

Extension educators have conducted public issues education programming over the years, calling it by various names and relating it to a wide range of issues. It is also practiced by people in organizations and communities—sometimes as neutral parties eager to support better decision making, sometimes as partisans who blend advocacy with their educational roles. One of the main reasons Cooperative Extension conducts leadership development programs is to create a cadre of people in agriculture, in community leadership positions and within the broader public who can help others speak to issues with insight and responsibility.

One role for Cooperative Extension is to provide training for these “volunteer” public issues educators. It may work in partnership with these people, or it may take the lead in education when the topic is crucial and the Extension agent/educator is the most appropriate person to fill the leadership role.

Whether public issues education becomes a major part of your work, or serves as a framework that illuminates the controversies linked to other educational programs, it will challenge you and enrich your work.

Public issues educators respond

We asked experienced public issues educators how they would respond to some of the concerns often raised by beginners. Their answers follow.

"I'd like to do public issues education, but I don't know how."

Tim Wallace: What we need to do is just get started, and find out what the real gaps are, instead of just imagining them.

I don't have the process skills."

Fred Woods: You've got someone on your state Extension staff who does. It shouldn't be a problem to ask for help on process skills, just as you ask for help on subject matter skills.

Georgia Stevens: Let's clarify the issue first, *then* identify the skills we'll need to move ahead.

"This sort of process takes too long."

Ron Faas: It might be a situation of "take the time now or take it later." Also, there may be alternatives to the amount of time it seems like it would take.

Tim Wallace: It does take a lot of energy and a lot of time, but you can phase it in segments.

"I'm a community person. I don't have a base in an academic institution."

Tim Wallace: Communities have many resources, including universities, that they can draw on.

Fred Woods: Extension can help. Every state has at least one person with public issues education responsibility, and Extension can provide access to the relevant academic base.

"I can't generate interest, even though a real and important issue exists."

Georgia Stevens: If it's a genuine issue; there's bound to be interest. It's more a matter of uncovering the interest by bringing interest parties together.

Tim Wallace: Others must not be on your wavelength; you'll have to do a lot more sounding of the community-asking questions, then listening to the feedback.

Fred Woods: Is it your interest, or is it truly a community interest? If it truly is something the public should be interested in, maybe it's not stated in the proper way and you should work on framing the issue in a way that is meaningful to the community.

"I'm caught in the middle."

Fred Woods: That's the challenge and the fun of doing public issues education—doing solid educational work in the midst of controversial issues, and yet not becoming part of the controversy.

Tim Wallace: As facilitator, you can respond like this: "Well let's take a look. Is your point of view up here? if so, we've got it."

Ron Faas: Clarify your educational role; you may be caught in the middle because people misperceive that role.

Tim Wallace: "...And remember, my role is a facilitator and a questioner: I'm not here to advocate *any* point of view. That's your responsibility."

Fred Woods: Tell the same story to all the parties concerned..

Wes Daberkow: "Caught in the middle" implies there are only two options. One way to take off some heat is to generate more options.

How will I know I helped make a difference?

Fred Woods: Remember that you don't measure making a difference by *your* opinion of whether the best choice was made. It's whether people feel that they made an informed decision.

"I prefer to be an advocate, not a neutral educator."

Tim Wallace: Your credibility is at stake as a community leader. You've got to be objective about the outcomes, although not neutral about the process used for resolution.

Ron Faas: It's important for facilitators *and* participants to distinguish between advocating an outcome and advocating process. It is appropriate—almost inevitable—for the educator to advocate a process.

"The group I'm working with is stuck in gridlock; the issue seems impossible to resolve."

Tim Wallace: The facilitator can say to the group: "Time out! Put yourself in the other person's shoes and write down why *you* think *they* think *you're* being unreasonable."

Fred Woods: Training in mediation and conflict resolution will help.

Ron Faas: If the educator is less experienced, this may be a time to call for help. Consider calling in a negotiator or mediator to take stock of the situation, maybe help work out an appropriate course of action—possible formal dispute resolution.

"Someone is dominating the process. What can I do about it?"

Fred Woods: Remind them that others have to have their opportunity to be heard as well. If possible, before you start, try to set rules to which all agree to, to keep any one group or individual from dominating.

More tips and guiding principles

Below are excerpts from *Educating About Public Issues: Lessons from Eleven Innovative Public Policy Education Projects* by Alan J. Hall, Jennifer C. Greene, and Carla Waterman.

- * "One element that was missing from many of the projects' interventions was 'intensity.' Successful public policy education programs require an educational intervention that is sufficiently intense or powerful accomplish the intended aims for the intended audience and issue."
- * "The likelihood of successful public policy education programs is enhanced when they are planned and implemented by a coalition of organizations."
- * "Strong coalitions are not automatically formed by the coming together of two or more organizations. Rather, they must be created and carefully nurtured..."
- * "Coalitions typically have benefits for individual and organizational members. However... individual leadership development and organizational change should not be substituted for meaningful progress in the policy arena."
- * "Public policy education can be effective in the absence of a formal coalition, but not in the absence of the spirit or broad intentions of a coalition—specifically, the commitment to meaningfully incorporating diversity—by offering policy alternatives that reflect different points of view and, at root, different values—in the form and function of the program offered."
- * "Different modes of public policy education are legitimate and appropriate for different audiences, issues and contexts. The dialogue mode warrants increased attention..."
- * "The empowerment mode... is underutilized, suggesting a future need to more concertedly reach out to groups and individuals who are currently affected by but not involved in the policy process."
- * "Attention to process as well as content is a critical feature..."
- * "The media are an underutilized but potentially strategic resource for public policy education."
- * "Tensions between education and advocacy are inevitable... Guidelines saying 'educate, don't advocate' are not completely adequate."
- * "...Purposeful attention to evaluation design would [be] helpful at the beginning of project development."
- * "Project staff should not be the sole evaluators of their projects."
- * "Outcomes for participants... were reported far more frequently than impacts on public issues or on the policy making process, even though the latter is clearly of interest... More emphasis is needed on the assessment of issue or process impacts."
- * "Realistic and significant targets for [sustainable outcomes include] changes in the way participating organizations understand, value, or conduct their work (capacity-building outcomes)."

Step-by-step approaches to public issues education

chapter 2

Grappling with controversial public issues can be a complex process. Everyone would like to know: How far have we come? Where are we now? And when will we "get there"?

Anyone who begins to think of himself or herself as a public issues educator will probably be called upon to answer such questions. Having a step-by-step model of public issues education to present and discuss makes it easier to:

- Help participants develop a shared understanding of the process in which they are involved. This can lead to better teamwork, more information sharing, and the likelihood of working through differences. (Simply informing people about the process would be a useful contribution in itself.)
- Give people a fresh understanding of the process. This could help them to move past sticking points. For example, if people think the situation is strictly "win or lose," the possibility of collaborative conflict resolution may change their opinion. If some people believe their voices don't matter, a sequence incorporating widespread public involvement may give them the opportunity to share their ideas.

Being clear about the sequence of steps can be valuable to the educator as well as the participants. An understanding of the process can help answer questions like these:

- What types of educational activities would be appropriate at each stage of the process?
- How can I explain educational goals, plans and expected results to others?
- How can I articulate a vision of public issues education that others can understand and accept?

Answering these questions would be simpler if there were one accurate or official way to describe the process for addressing issues—but each issue is different. Also, there are various conceptual frameworks, or "models" of the process, which give us a different view or understanding. Some sequences are familiar; for example, how a bill becomes a law. Some are less widely known: how a government regulation is proposed and reviewed. Some we use all the time with rarely a thought: how to think through a practical problem and come up with some novel solutions.

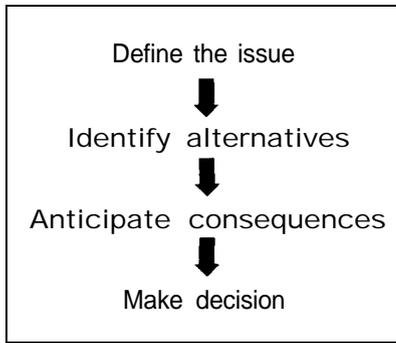
The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of some models—step-by-step sequences—that have proven useful for describing the process of addressing issues. Most of them are also useful for guiding the process.

Key points from some of the models will be explained more fully in later sections of this document. The list of references and resources can help you find more detailed information about each of the models. But the purpose of this section is not to make anyone an expert on the models; instead, it is to make the point that a public issues educator needs clarity about the process, which can take the form of a model, and to provide some ideas that may help you choose a suitable model or develop your own.

Being clear about the sequence of steps can be valuable to the educator as well as the participants.

The models

Alternatives and consequences

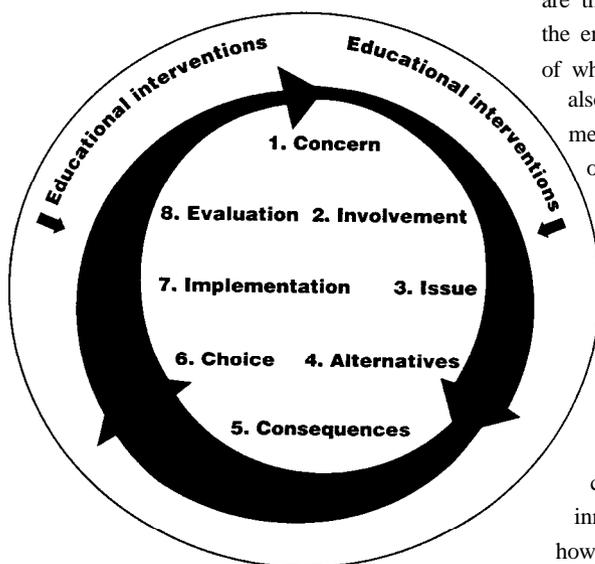


The Alternatives and Consequences model stresses the middle stages of the issue resolution process: clarifying options and anticipating the impacts of each. This model assumes that an issue has been defined and focuses on the central elements of a thoughtful choice. This focus on the key concepts of identifying alternatives and solutions, then analyzing the consequences – the “what-ifs” – of each alternative, is so important that the same steps can be found in nearly all other models as well.

An important feature of the Alternatives and Consequences model is that it avoids favoritism toward any one alternative. Although it is possible to use this model to facilitate discussion in which participants themselves identify and ana-

lyze the alternatives and consequences, the model has more often been used as an aid for organizing experts’ presentations about public issues. Experts in such a role need to spend a great deal of time with colleagues and other knowledgeable people to pinpoint the analytical heart of an issue. Then they need to incorporate that insight into their educational approach in ways that avoid divisiveness. Some people believe that the educator must know more about the issue than anyone else to lead a discussion, while others believe that a good facilitator can call in experts and feed them questions to bring out the points needed for group discussion and educated decision making.

Issue evolution/educational intervention⁶

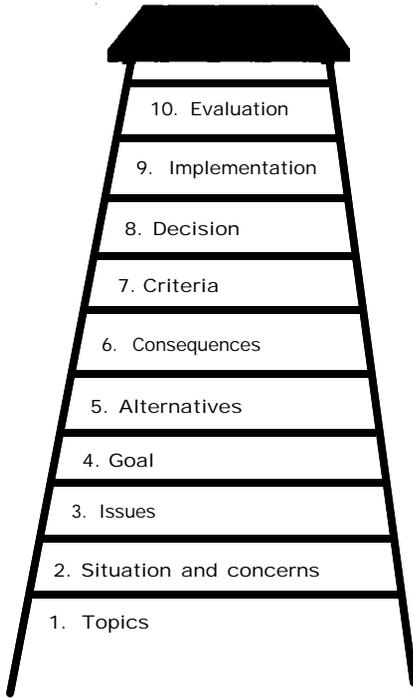


This model consists of eight stages or steps; alternatives and consequences are the middle two. Earlier stages include the emergence of a problem or concern out of which the issue develops. This model also clarifies the decision making, implementation and evaluation stages that occur. (The next two models highlight similar stages.)

The stages before “alternatives” and after “consequences” offer additional roles for the educator—in fact, a key feature of this model is the possible roles it suggests. The model’s “educational intervention” aspect is represented as an outer circle, centered around the eight-step inner circle. The inner circle describes how public issues evolve “in the real

world.” The outer circle describes ways that education can be introduced into each step of the process. The model assumes that an educator can determine an issue’s stage; then design and implement educational interventions appropriate for that stage. For example, in Stage 1, educators may help people understand a problematic situation. In Stage 2, they might help identify decision makers and affected parties and get them involved. In Stage 3, they might help participants clarify their goals and understand the conflicting goals of other participants.

The Ladder⁷



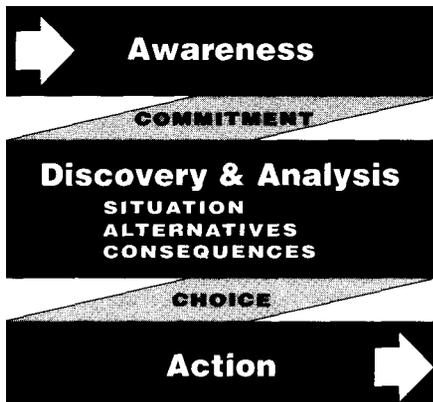
The Ladder model, created by public issues educators in California, is distinguished primarily by its emphasis on a step-by-step process of group discussion among people with diverse perspectives. In sharp contrast to Alternatives and Consequences (as it is often implemented), the Ladder model casts the educator as facilitator and allows participants to control the process, including identifying issues, alternatives, consequences, etc. The concept of a ladder is important: Like a ladder, the model can take a group up or down an issue, across an abyss of misunderstanding, or it can be collapsed into a few sections and converted to a variety of steps, depending upon the group’s capabilities.

Use of the Ladder requires someone with experience in educational facilitation. Sensitive, skillful facilitation can help to create and maintain a forum in which constructive interaction, rather than polarization, takes place. The task is not to provide answers, but to ask the right questions so that the group moves

ahead. For example, one facilitation technique is to back off when things get too contentious and ask the group members what they would do if they were in the educator’s position. The Ladder is intended to produce free-wheeling but structured meetings in which all participants feel empowered and free to say what they feel. It will take the group to a point of resolution, the specifics of which may not be known or predictable at the first one or two meetings.

- Key points of the Ladder include:
 - Identifying criteria for weighing alternative chores which satisfy all participants.
 - Repeating the alternatives and consequences analysis for implementation strategies and tactics, since each may have different chances of success.
 - Hooking final evaluation to the initial concerns which gave rise to the issue.

Discovery and analysis⁸



The Discovery and Analysis model combines steps from several other models. Its name reflects the emphasis this model puts on two modes of thinking about issues: expansive, “discovery” thinking and systematic, critical analysis. This model intentionally draws upon several different meanings of the word “discovery”:

- sharing of information previously known only to some of the parties (as in the legal profession’s use of the word);
- awareness of new or previously unknown information (as in “scientific discovery”);

- the experience of new perspectives, environments, or experiences (as in the “discoveries” of explorers); and
- participation in generating new knowledge as well as learning existing facts (as in “discovery learning”).

Analysis, in this model, includes the systematic, rational analysis of information about current situations, trends, problems, alternative solutions, and likely consequences of different alternatives.

SHAPES ⁹

Project name: _____		
EVENTS	1	2...
Prior situation		
Situation		
Initiating set		
Legitimizers		
Diffusion set		
Define needs		
Commitment		
Goals		
Means		
Plan		
Resources		
Launching		
Action		
Evaluation		
Event codes		
1 = planner reviews situation		
2 = information assembled, etc.		
Actor codes		
A = county planner		
B = county commissioners, etc.		

The SHAPES model takes the form of a matrix. Steps in the process are listed in rows; project events which happen over time are listed in columns. (Events includes items such as “planner becomes acquainted with the county,” “existing information assembled,” “data updated,” “initial meeting with community residents,” “set priorities,” “establish committees,” etc.) In each cell of the matrix, where a row (step) intersects a particular column (event), the key participants in the event and the outcome of the event are summarized.

Any list of steps could be used for the row labels, but the steps actually identified in the SHAPES model place greater emphasis than the other models on helping participants take action on agreed-upon goals, and relatively less emphasis on working out agreement in areas of conflict. Consequently, there are more steps that deal with forming and legitimizing the group, getting a commitment to act,

and working out detailed implementation plans. There is correspondingly less emphasis on defining the issues and on weighing the consequences and deciding among competing alternatives.

The SHAPES model was developed when an Extension educator wanted a more descriptive historical record of what he and his group were doing. He displayed the model as a “group memory” on large sheets of paper tacked to the walls—a visual record of what had happened, what was currently going on, and what might still happen. Used in this way, the model possesses great appeal. Since a highly visible record is provided, the model readily shows the ups and downs that any group process takes over time, including the critical incidents which bring about key accomplishments. It also identifies people who help or hinder the process.

Interest-based problem solving ¹⁰

<p>PRE-NEGOTIATION PHASE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Getting started 2. Representation 3. Ground rules and agenda 4. Problem definition 5. Joint fact-finding <p>NEGOTIATION PHASE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Criteria development 7. Generating alternatives 8. Evaluation and creating agreements 9. Binding the parties to the agreements 10. Producing a written agreement 11. Ratification <p>IMPLEMENTATION PHASE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Linking information agreements to formal decision making 13. Monitoring implementation

The Interest-Based Problem Solving model—like other dispute resolution models—contains many of the same steps as models previously discussed. It differs, however, in placing more emphasis on the special difficulties of communicating and making decisions in the presence of heightened conflict and emotion.

The goal of this model is to help key stakeholders work out mutually acceptable solutions. The steps include establishing ground rules, joint fact-finding, packaging agreements, and securing commitment and ratification of agreements from each party.

The Interest-Based Problem Solving model is designed to help find solutions in situations of serious conflict and controversy. It strives for balance between the parties’ personal needs, their interpersonal relationships, and the results of the

process. Building trust and credibility through responsive facilitation techniques is crucial. Facilitation is provided to maximize group trust and compatibility even though many different (and often opposing) interests are at the table. The focus is on problem solving based on mutual understanding of the various participants’ interests, as opposed to arguments over each participant’s positions or preferred solutions. The model incorporates problem solving with significant attention to the people in the group, their needs, and the group’s needs, as well as a commitment to resolving the conflictual issue.

National Issues Forums ¹¹

<p>KEY FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare leaders Printed materials–issue book Ground rules Discussion–working through Personal reflection

The National Issues Forums model emphasizes steps that are similar to Alternatives and Consequences and Interest-Based Problem Solving, even though the terminology is different. The National Issues Forums are also geared toward exploring alternatives, but in this approach, the intended participants are ordinary citizens who don't necessarily have an official policy making role or even a direct personal stake in the issue. The National Issues Forums model especially emphasizes preparation of discussion leaders, agreement on ground rules, and "closing"—a step that asks participants to reflect on what they've come up with that is different from the usual positions taken on public issues.

The National Issues Forums model takes the form of a town meeting and engages the public in deliberation about an issue. Written materials, called "issue books," provide background information

and outline three or four major options. The forums are discussions led by trained facilitators; the goal is to get people to move from initial opinions to more thoughtful judgments which incorporate an understanding of others' viewpoints. The model emphasizes that making choices is difficult and illustrates this by having the group members work through their own conflicting emotions about the trade-offs that will have to be made to resolve the issue. Participants are expected to find themselves struggling with trade-offs between things they hold dear and their increased understanding and acceptance of the legitimacy of others' points of view. The program ends with a shared understanding of the problem and a focus on the competing values that make the issue hard to decide. The group considers the consequences of making a choice and leaves with an awareness of what is still unresolved.

Citizen politics ¹²

<p>Creating a Public Space</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Choose a public problem 2. Invite diverse players 3. Define conceptual framework of a public space 4. Establish knowledge base 5. Demonstrate relationship between diverse interests and problem 6. Redefine problem 7. Develop strategies for problem-solving 8. Clarify roles, responsibilities 9. Build relationships among diverse interests 10. Evaluate

The primary goal of the citizen politics model is to "bring the public back into politics" by counteracting the dominant role played by politicians and professional policymakers. The idea is to make politics something in which the public participates. The model is built around several key concepts:

- the idea of a "public world" that is different from people's private lives, but equally important;
- "self interest" as a legitimate starting point for seeking solutions to shared problems;
- "diversity" as a source of relevant experience and knowledge; and
- "power" as something that can be created by building relationships. The citizen politics model does not provide one definitive step-by-step process.

In practice, emphasis is usually placed on the early stages of the policy making process, where problems are defined, people understand how they are affected, and key players are identified and brought into the process. Defining problems from multiple perspectives involves bringing diverse interests to the table, eliciting self-interests through storytelling, and building a mission statement that reflects the varied interests of the group. Political analysis and mapping are used to identify the interests surrounding a problem and the power relationships through which problems can be solved. Participants are often those normally uninvolved in public life (young people, the elderly, the poor, racial and ethnic minorities). These groups receive help in building relationships with other key players who already work together redefining and solving problems.

A brief guide to the models

Even if no single model fits your situation, each has its particular strengths. Following is a brief overview of important features from the models that may help you develop your own.

- **Balances analysis of alternatives and consequences:** highlighted by Alternatives and Consequences. Included in Issue Evolution, Ladder, Discovery and Analysis, Issue-based Problem Solving, and National Issues Forums.
- **Emphasizes needed knowledge and analysis:** Alternatives and Consequences
- **Promotes comprehensive list of steps:** highlighted by Issue Evolution. Also a feature of Ladder, Discovery and Analysis, SHAPES, and Issue-Based Problem Solving.
- **Links policy making steps and educational intervention:** highlighted by Issue Evolution.
- **Provides interactive process for leading a diverse group through all the steps:** highlighted by Ladder; also a feature of Issue-based Problem Solving.
- **Highlights interplay between creative and analytical thinking:** Discovery and Analysis.
- **Provides prominent visual display of the process:** highlighted by SHAPES.
- **Highlights links between theoretical process and steps actually taken in a real situation:** SHAPES.
- **Tools for confronting conflict constructively:** highlighted by Issue-based Problem Solving (focus on interests and trust building); also a feature of National Issues Forums ("working through" an issue) and Citizen Politics (emphasis on identifying and respecting self-interests).
- **Emphasis on involving citizens not normally active in policy making:** highlighted by National Issues Forums and Citizen Politics.
- **Stresses links between citizens and policy makers:** highlighted by Citizen Politics.
- **Applies an alternatives and consequences analysis to choices about implementation steps:** highlighted by Ladder model.

Essential elements

For any particular public issues education project, it may be that one of the models will provide a good fit for describing and guiding the process. Or it may be that no single existing model describes the issue-sequence in which your community is involved. If so, you may need to borrow something from one model, something else from another, and invent some new elements as well.

Even if your task is to choose one of the existing models—but especially if you need to devise a new one—it may help to have a checklist of essential elements.

1. Multiple perspectives need to be included.
Matters of public concern become issues because they give rise to controversy. Different points of view and different interests exist. Rarely will helping a single individual or interest-group formulate its position on an issue move things closer to a solution. What is usually needed is a process that brings the diverse viewpoints into some type of interaction that can lead to new understandings and new solutions.
2. A structured process is useful.
A step-by-step sequence that moves from a problem situation toward a mutually acceptable solution is desirable. Such a sequence or structure provides a shared understanding of what is going on and what activities are appropriate. The sequence or structure will often convey the message that different viewpoints need to be understood and that agreements need to be worked out.
3. Ground rules are needed.
It can help for the group to generate a set of ground rules; for example, respecting others' points of view. The framework provided by a step-by-step sequence can serve as the basis and rationale for the ground rules.
4. Broader understandings are required.
To reach shared understandings, people may need to move beyond narrow personal perspectives. This happens through informational presentations and dialogue, both of which require facilitation that encourages good listening and an open-minded attitude.
5. A shared information base is crucial.
Science-based facts and understandings are an important component of the shared perspective. Other stakeholders' values, experience and "local knowledge" are also an essential component of the "big picture."
6. Shared goals can drive the process.
Participants' shared interests or compatible goals can provide a basis for mutual learning and collaborative problem solving. At the very least, people need to acknowledge that there are other parties in a controversy who have different goals or interests which are valid and legitimate. No one-facilitators or other participants-should oversimplify such differences in the name of finding shared goals.
7. Mutually acceptable solutions are worth seeking.
Even when "win-win" solutions aren't readily apparent, the most significant contribution is often to generate alternatives and assess their consequences with an eye to finding possible solutions with which everyone will be content. This may be a matter of creativity and inventiveness, tinkering with the details, or developing packages of solutions that are satisfactory for all. It requires looking at consequences not just from one's own perspective, but from the viewpoint of other parties as well.
8. The process is ongoing.
A decision is not an end point. Often, it is the beginning of a real-world "experiment" to see whether the chosen course will achieve the expected results—whether it will resolve the issue in a mutually acceptable way. Most public decisions have unanticipated consequences. Some work. Some don't. Learning why or why not may be the most valuable piece of education of all. It goes beyond individual learning; it is learning at the community or societal level.
9. The process itself deserves evaluation.
How well did the process work? Would it have worked better with some modifications? Or is there another process (model) that would have worked better? This also is an important part of the learning which results from a sequence of public issues education and issue resolution. To the extent that a clear, step-by-step process has been agreed upon and tried, such a process evaluation will be easier and more instructive.

Designing educational programs on public issues

chapter 3

Designing your educational program around a public issue involves three key steps:

1. focusing on an issue: anticipating, selecting and framing it
2. identifying and recruiting participants for the educational program
3. selecting appropriate educational delivery methods.

Each of these steps is explained more fully in the sections that follow.

Choosing an issue

Anticipating issues

Studying early information about emerging issues gives you maximum time to:

- decide whether to develop an educational program
- frame the issue in a way that lends itself to education and dialogue
- develop educational plans and materials
- be ready for “teachable moments” that may occur.

Time spent anticipating issues pays off by giving you time to do some advance planning. But opportunities for public

issues education sometimes emerge during the course of other work.

Sometimes it's more accurate to say that public

issues erupt when contro-

versy occurs unexpectedly.³ Even in those cases, prior work anticipating issues and clarifying educational priorities helps.

Public issues educators are not the only ones interested in developing a process for anticipating issues. In every organization, there are a number of issues that are crucial to the organization's future. A growing number recognize this and conduct “environmental scanning” to obtain maximum lead time to deal with emerging threats or opportunities. Topics vary from one organization to another. For example, a corporation may track consumers' safety concerns, employees' benefit preferences, or a community's environmental issues.

The process can vary as well. An agricultural commodity association might develop an in-house environmental scanning capacity, or enter into a contract with a research institute or consulting firm. The process can be simple and still work; for example, a small group of people can agree to review publications and conduct a regular brown-bag discussion group.

As a public issues educator, you should anticipate issues that will provide the focus for educational programming. You should also be aware that others will use this information differently. For example, corporations will feed it into their strategic planning process. Certain corporations anticipate issues as the first step in “issues management.” Other steps include research, prioritizing issues and selecting those that need action, developing alternative courses of action, and deciding what action to take.⁴

In every organization, there are a number of issues that are crucial to the organization's future.

Issues management encompasses a range of possible actions. For example, Johnson & Johnson allied itself with consumer concerns in its handling of the Tylenol poisonings. Mobil Oil promotes a particular political viewpoint in its op-ed advertisements on energy policy, and the insurance industry occasionally aligns itself with consumer groups to promote automobile safety regulations. Interest groups, such as environmental organizations, are also increasingly savvy about identifying issues and trends. By their statements or actions, organizations attempt to influence how the public understands or frames issues, and the connection it makes between the organization and the issue.

A public issues educator should not expect to “manage issues” in the same way that issues management practitioners do; the goal of public issues education is not to produce decisions that benefit a particular organization. (Of course, good public education programs on well-chosen issues will reflect positively on the organizations that conduct them, and may attract political and financial support.) But the decisions that are made about those issues are for others—not educators—to decide. For educators, the role of issue tracking is to help select and frame issues in ways that enhance the likelihood of effective, democratic education.

An issue-scanning process can be guided by—and can refine and expand—a category scheme of issues relevant to a particular organization. Below is a sample.

A category scheme for issues

category: related issue areas

world: global economy, international relations

society: health, education, media, family, consumer preferences, racial & ethnic diversity

economy: economic conditions, trade, fiscal policy, new technologies

government: legislative and regulatory priorities, taxation and spending

natural environment: protection problems and priorities, resources

Recognizing sensitive issues

A reputation for fairness, balance and credibility is crucial to your success as a public issues educator. If you or your organization fail to anticipate an issue’s sensitive nature, observers may detect a real or imagined bias which can damage your neutral stance.

Scenario A: A nutritionist describes new government guidelines on fat consumption and the food pyramid which recommends daily portions of meats, grains, leafy vegetables, etc. A cattle rancher in the audience protests that the nutritionist, her organization and nutritionists everywhere are out to get the cattle industry, and that the food pyramid attacks a valuable nutritional source without scientific justification.

Scenario B: While making a presentation on woodlot management, a forester implies that wetlands regulations are too severe and landowners may ignore some of them. An environmental organization’s newsletter publishes a summary with a negative commentary about the forester and the agency for which he works.

How can you avoid these problems? Trying to anticipate issues helps by providing early warning of volatile subjects. A number of issues are predictably controversial (see sidebar). But attention to two key points can help you avoid the pitfalls of sensitive issues:

1. Always consider that an issue looks different to different “stakeholders.” Ask yourself: “Who else cares about this issue?” and “What’s their point of view on it?”
2. Remember that, as a public issues educator, your job is to help various interests understand each other. The public issue educator’s reputation for fairness, balance and respect for all points of view is crucial to success. Always act in ways that maintain the respect and credibility warranted by your role as a public issues educator.

In summary:

- Identify issues in the early stages of their evolution.
- Involve program participants in identifying the issue(s) that matter to them.
- Explicitly note different perceptions about the issue to avoid being seen as an advocate for a particular outcome or a particular group.

Anticipating controversy ¹⁵

Any of the following characteristics provide you with a clue that an issue may be especially heated and controversial:

Quality of life, standard of living

- People believe their livelihood or standard of living are threatened.

Personal health and safety

- There is a real or perceived health risk.
- There is a risk of bodily injury or harm.

Environment: There is a risk to the environment which may threaten

- human health
- animals
- natural resources or scenic areas

Justice and equal opportunity

- People's sense of fairness, or justice is violated.
- Opportunities are being denied to a segment of the population.

Party politics

- The two major political parties have different perspectives on the issue

Government role

- There is a question of more government vs. less.
- There is a question about how many tax dollars to spend.
- There are questions about whether government "solutions" are impinging on individual rights and freedoms.
- Multiple government agencies are involved, and there is real or perceived conflict among their missions.

Notes on specific potential sources of controversy for your issue:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Selecting an issue

To make a significant contribution, public issues education programs must keep their focus over a period of time. More often than not, programs don't achieve the intensity of focus required to affect complex issues.¹⁶ It is likely that you will be able to take on only one public issue at a time, so selecting one is an important commitment.

A number of different criteria can be used to select issues. Among them:

- *Importance to the general public:* What is the intensity of concern among ordinary citizens (as identified, for example, through surveys or focus group interviews)? What is its priority in relation to other issues? Perhaps you can strike a balance in the issues you address between those important to policy makers and those of high priority to ordinary citizens.
- *Importance to policy makers:* This may be an important criterion, especially if the policy makers provide funding for the educators' programs. But the issues on policy makers' agendas are not always the most important or interesting issues for other groups or for the public at large.
- *Importance to specific interests:* How important is the issue to various demographic, interest, or clientele groups? If you select an issue important to a particular group, will you be tempted to cater to one point of view? Can you justify working with specific groups and not extend the same assistance to all others?

- *Fit*: How well does the issue fit with your own and your organization's areas of concern or expertise? Can you conduct a balanced educational program on these topics? Are you or your organization too closely identified with a particular point of view?
- *Human resources*: Do you have access to the technical expertise that is needed? (This is often less of an issue than it seems; expertise can be obtained from many sources.)
- *Timing*: Is it too late to make a positive contribution through education? Or too early—because there is not yet enough interest in the issue?

Your choice of issues will have implications for your organization. The type of issue selected will always make some kind of statement about you and your organization. That statement might be:

- Here is an organization that helps people address natural resource issues (or food system issues, or youth and family issues, or other specific categories).
- Here is an organization that helps people address whatever issues they care about most.
- Here is an organization that helps people with leadership skills, issue analysis, creative thinking, collaboration and negotiation. It works through tough issues with people who hold different points of view.

People will try to figure out how public issues education fits with the organization's broader purpose. The choice of issues covered in educational programs will clarify or complicate their understanding of your organization's mission.

The type of issue selected will always make some kind of statement.

In summary:

- Many issues exist at the same time, and they compete for people's time.
- Citizens engage themselves in issues they perceive will affect the quality of their lives.
- Personal experience is a stronger motivation for involvement than abstract national data.
- Perceived injustice or personal costs may motivate some people, while altruistic concerns, including the opportunity for volunteer efforts, might engage others.

Framing the question

One of the main benefits of getting an early start on an emerging issue is the opportunity to participate in framing the question—influencing the way other players and the broader public understand the issue. Research into creativity and problem solving shows that the way the question is posed is a key factor in determining the types and numbers of solutions that will ultimately be developed.

The educator will not be alone in trying to frame issues: the policy making process has been described as a “symbolic contest over which interpretations [of an issue] will prevail.”¹⁷ If BST, the hormone that increases milk yields, is understood as a naturally-occurring substance that increases yields and may reduce consumer prices, it is perceived very differently than if it is understood as unnatural tinkering with a natural process by a large profit-oriented company.

The public's understanding of an issue is often shaped by the news media. The media, in turn, are heavily influenced by the interpretation of issues from public officials, experts and other regularly-used news sources. Protest groups or other organizations with alternative or challenging points of view generally try to develop and publicize their own competing frames for issues they care about. However, their success is often limited by poor access to the news media or by failing to obtain serious, respectful coverage.

For you as the public issues educator, the objective should be to frame the question in a way that lends itself to education and discourse. This usually means stating the issue as a question (or questions) that all parties find acceptable and worthy of consideration. Consider the examples¹⁸ in the sidebar on the next page.

Examples: Framing the question¹⁹**"Ag and wildlife coexistence"**

When cotton growers and environmentalists sat down to talk in Cameron County, Texas, they named their committee the Ag and Wildlife Coexistence Committee. This name carried an implicit framing of the question: Can agriculture and wildlife interests coexist successfully in the county? Initially it appeared that the measures needed to protect an endangered falcon and the pesticides needed to grow cotton were incompatible. The wording was acceptable to all the participants because it didn't reflect a bias in favor of one viewpoint.

From "hunger" to "food security"

In recent years, many people concerned about hunger in the United States have shifted their focus to "food security." This phrase encompasses hunger and malnutrition, usually linked to low family income; it also include food access problems related to geographic location. It is a rewording that clarifies why a broader audience has a stake in the issue.

"Communities for child safety"

This phrase became the title of a project sponsored by 4-H, the National 4-H Council and other partners. It reflects a fresh way of looking at two old problems: accidental injury and child abuse. Combining the two problems has made it safer for people to come forward and talk about their concerns and possible solutions. As a separate topic, abuse was especially sensitive and difficult. The greatest strength of this new language, however, is that it generates positive energy by emphasizing a constructive point of view: What can communities do to create a safe environment for their children?

County food and Ag committees

This committee name implies a broad problem area—broad enough to let specific committees identify the issues they believe are most important. Extension's Northeast Network for Food, Health and Agriculture project worked with such committees on issues ranging from local farmers' markets to hunger to agricultural regulations.

Tips for framing issues

- Involve program participants in exploring the nature of the problem and framing the question.
- World events may affect a specific community, but important societal or global issues may be overlooked or even denied by a particular community unless data clearly demonstrate how the problem manifests itself locally.
- The issue must capture stakeholder interest. Help participants to articulate the ways that an issue touches their lives.

Identifying and recruiting participants

Anyone taking on the responsibilities of a public issues educator will need to think about who the potential learners are and how to recruit them. Identifying stakeholders is a standard part of planning for public involvement or alternative dispute resolution. Stakeholders are the people who hold a stake—have an interest—in the issue at hand.

For some issues, most or all of the stakeholders will be visibly involved. If it is early in an issue's evolution, you may need to pay special attention to identifying

The goal in public issues education should be to understand and take into account all the perspectives on an issue.

stakeholders. You can usually do this by identifying categories, then organizations or individuals within each category. The category list varies according to the issue.

Categories of stakeholders ²⁰

- neighborhood organizations
- interest groups
- government (all levels)
- public agencies
- private agencies
- religious institutions
- educational institutions
- professional associations
- foundations
- corporations
- private sector associations

Other categories are suggested by:

- The “Power Clusters” model of public policy making,²¹ which suggests that policies are shaped by interaction among:
 - administrative agencies
 - elected officials
 - interest groups
 - professional experts
 - attentive public
 - latent public
- The “Kings and Kingmakers” model,²² which divides the community into:
 - “kingmakers,” who exercise influence behind the scenes
 - “kings,” the visible elected and appointed decision makers
 - active citizens
 - interested citizens
 - uninvolved citizens
- The “Cornell Planning Matrix,”²³ which recommends identifying those affected by an issue at each of the following levels:
 - public policy makers
 - groups and organizations—agencies, business firms, interest groups, etc.
 - individuals and families (whether organized or not)

Other ways to build the list of stakeholders:

- Review news coverage of the issue.
- Brainstorm with a group of knowledgeable individuals.
- Interview people involved, asking them to identify additional stakeholders.

People often find it easiest to think of stakeholders with viewpoints similar to their own. Here are some questions to help you generate additional names:

Q: Who are the decision makers? Who will probably be required to make decisions before the issue can be resolved?

Q: Who can obstruct a decision? From whom might you expect opposition?

It may be useful to show some people your initial list of key organizations, categories and individuals; then ask them to add to it.

Involving the stakeholders

Do the learners in a public issues education program need to include stakeholders on all sides of an issue?

Ideally, the answer is “yes.” The goal in public issues education should be to understand and take into account all the perspectives on an issue. The most effective way to ensure that all viewpoints are covered is to have someone physically represent each one at discussions and other activities.

Here are some reasons why all points of view need to be included (or at least understood):

- Democratic policy making is based on the assumption that all parties to an issue have a right to participate and present their views for legitimate consideration.
- Involving everyone is perceived as the fair thing to do, and contributes to fair decision making. (Interviews with the public suggest that fairness is widely considered an important standard. People believe that public decisions should be fair—even, in many cases, if they personally must give something up. Example: a tavern owner who favors raising the legal drinking age.)

- Decisions may be blocked by those whose views were not considered.
- When decisions are made, they may be attacked, reversed or undermined by unrepresented factions. Omitted parties may resort to legal action, which is costly and time-consuming.
- Implementing the decisions may be hampered because of continuing opposition and noncompliance on the part of those who were left out of the process.

Consider using these arguments if some stakeholders don't want to participate—and especially if they don't want other stakeholders to participate.

Despite the preference for programs with multiple stakeholders, meaningful and useful educational programs *can* be conducted for single groups. Here are some tips for successful programming with only one interest—or with one group at a time:

- Don't become an advocate for any group. Client-focused education starts with a particular clientele group an educator works with or cares about. In the extreme, client-focused programming may mean doing whatever a particular group needs or wants to fulfill its particular interests. An educator who sympathizes with one group to the point of simply reinforcing its preconceptions is unlikely to help anyone, including the client group.
- Stay "issue-focused."²⁴ Always be aware of multiple perspectives on an issue.

- Work to increase understanding of the issue, including other parties' viewpoints. Even if a group's goal is to promote only its own welfare, it may be able to do so more effectively if its members understand how the issues they care about are viewed by decision makers and opponents.

It isn't always possible to involve people from all sides of an issue in educational programs. Not everyone will participate willingly, or be easily recruited. Some will be skeptical of governmental processes or "big business" and reluctant to participate in a process that may involve collaborating with those sectors. Some may be too busy (elected officials, for example), or may consider themselves too important to take the time required to learn or work on collaborative solutions.

Other stakeholders may feel disempowered or unwelcome in a learning or problem solving process. Their self-image, confidence, or perceptions of others' attitudes toward them may hamper their involvement. Because these factors cut unequally across demographic variables such as race, class and educational background, special efforts may be necessary to ensure that all interests affected by an issue are represented.

Below are some suggestions to help you recruit participants.

- Remember that participation in public issues often depends on people's realization that they (or things or people they care about) are affected by an issue; on their perception that they are affected in ways that are not "right" or "fair"; and on a sense of hopefulness that something can be done. Anything an educator can do to encourage these perceptions may stimulate involvement.

- Consider that the actual number of participants in public issues education may be less important than their "representativeness." Well-attended educational events that omit relevant perspectives on the issues may not be nearly as valuable as those with fewer participants, but with all points of view represented. The idea is that even people who are not physically involved should be able to see that their perspectives were included in the discussion.

- Take the trouble to extend invitations to people whose points of view need to be included. It may not be sufficient to simply ensure that educational events are "open to everyone." Those who do not participate will neither hear nor be heard by those who do, and those who do participate will have an incomplete picture of the situation. Therefore, extending invitations is worth the time and energy. Beg, plead, cajole, twist arms—whatever you feel you can do. Explain, as often as you must, the reasons why all points of view need to be included.

- If representatives of particular viewpoints cannot be persuaded to participate, look for other ways to bring an understanding of their viewpoints to participants. If local business people cannot participate, find someone who is knowledgeable about their situation and who can represent the business community's interests and values to other participants. (Another possibility: Have some of the participants interview business people and report to the group at a future meeting.)

Designing educational programs

The goal of public issues education is to help an issue's stakeholders move forward to a satisfactory resolution of the issue. Key questions you can ask include:

- What do the participants need to learn? Specifically, who needs to learn what?
- What educational delivery methods will best encourage and facilitate learning?

Learners may need factual information, process assistance, or both.

Who needs to learn what?

In public issues education, learning needs and objectives depend in part on the stage of the policy making process. The list below can be used as a learning needs checklist. Add questions if necessary; then use checkmarks to indicate "yes."

- Do some or all of the stakeholders need a clearer understanding of the problem, its causes, and its implications for different groups?
- Do more stakeholders need to become involved through increased awareness and motivation?
- Do one or more groups of stakeholders need to clarify their interests and set goals?
- Do stakeholders need more understanding of each other's situations, values and interests?
- Is help needed to identify or create alternatives or to analyze consequences?
- Do stakeholders need a better understanding of how decisions are made, and by whom?
- Is help needed in implementing decisions or evaluating outcomes?

Learners may need factual information, process assistance, or both. Information can be provided by experts, shared among the participants, or gathered by participants through their own research. Process assistance can include help in getting involved in the policy making process, in interacting with people on different sides of an issue, and in learning itself—recognizing that learning is a complicated process.

In addition, you may need to offer special assistance to those who are affected by public issues but not involved or well-represented in the policy making process. Such individuals may need help to allow them to participate equitably with individuals who are already involved and influential. They may benefit from additional background information or from programs designed to develop leadership and public participation skills. This special assistance is one meaning of the term "empowerment."

Different participants may need different information or process assistance. Or the information may need to be "packaged" differently (for example, with more or less detail, complexity, or sophistication) for different groups.

Delivery methods

An immense array of delivery methods has been identified by adult education specialists.²⁵ Learning activities need to be "ordered or sequenced so they reinforce one another to create awareness, stimulate interest and encourage behavioral change or adoption of new behavior."²⁶ Methods need to be tailored to the learners. The most effective methods are those that:

- foster motivation
- give clear objectives
- focus on the learners, respecting their abilities and building on what they already know
- provide opportunities for practice and feedback.

Given different learning styles, it is generally recommended that a variety of methods be used in any given educational program. Any delivery method can be appropriate for public issues education, depending on the objectives, the learners' needs, and the educator's abilities. Methods of largely one-way communication have their place.

Primarily one-way communication

- lectures
- newspaper articles
- television
- radio
- newsletters
- fact sheets
- film or video
- dramatizations
- exhibits
- tours
- consultation

Note that these can be used to communicate multiple as well as single perspectives on an issue and to communicate with audiences of diverse as well as homogeneous stakeholders. It isn't easy, however, to present complex material, either spoken or written, in a way that accurately reflects multiple points of view and satisfies a diverse audience. Partly for that reason, other methods that permit or encourage communication in multiple directions will often be better choices for the public issues educator.

Two- or multi-way formats

- dialogue
- symposium
- panel
- debate
- forum (total group discussion)
- group interview
- experience-sharing discussion
- problem-solving discussion
- study group
- participative case

Delivery methods for public issues education may also include ongoing and highly informal activities such as notes, phone calls, street-corner conversations, and any other message that serves to promote individuals'

understanding of an issue and willingness or ability to work with others on its resolution.

Intensity of intervention

An educational program on a public issue can range from a single meeting, document, or consultation to a multi-year series of interrelated materials and events designed to move a community through the entire issue evolution cycle.

Programs anywhere along this spectrum can contribute to public decision making. But any effort that is seriously intended to improve the public decision making process or significantly help resolve an issue will normally need to be a major effort, involving many different delivery methods. As a general rule, you should select only a limited number of issues for such attention, and they should be chosen with care. They are likely to require a commitment of several months—perhaps even years—and the efforts of several people.

Educational programs in this sense can best be visualized as an ongoing and ever-changing sequence of various events, complemented by supplemental materials (print, video, etc.), media coverage and day-by-day feedback and consultation. The aim should be to design a package intended to get a community (or the participants) from point A to point B—from current situation to issue resolution—and then to modify the package repeatedly as the issue evolves and the educators learn from experience.

Since public issues education meshes with the evolution of the issues themselves, flexibility is essential. Such pro-

An educational program can range from a single meeting, document, or consultation to a multi-year series of interrelated materials and events.

grams can be included in long-range plans of work with the understanding that they seldom unfold according to plan. You may have to adjust program decisions as the issues evolve. Unanticipated educational needs will inevitably emerge, while others that were anticipated will fail to materialize. In some cases, additional resources, beyond initial commitments, may be needed. At the other extreme, the issue may fade away, and an educational program will be dropped.

The program may appear to be in a constant state of flux. You may be tempted to deal with this by limiting the program to familiar audiences or formats. A more appropriate source of stability is a clear mission statement for public issues education.²⁷ Within such a framework, you can ask repeatedly, "Is this the best way to provide educational opportunities on this issue? Is this the right approach for these learners, and for this situation?"

Special topics in public issues education

chapter 4

This chapter addresses five topics that are important to the success of public issues education:

- creating new structures, such as coalitions
- science and dialogue: blending technical information and process information; helping scientific experts contribute effectively to public issues education
- collaborative conflict resolution with polarized groups
- the news media
- evaluation

Creating new educational structures

It is possible to create a new educational structure working from the perspective of either an educator or a learner.

Partnerships to deliver public issues education

In recent years, partnerships have proliferated in the corporate world. Toyota and General Motors teamed up to create Geo automobiles; Ford and Mazda are collaborating on several models. Northwest and KLM Airlines have linked their routes to offer

“Worldwide Reliability.” Several other airline pairs also offer joint ticketing and shared flight numbers. Organizations of many kinds now realize that even their competitors are potential collaborators.

A partnership strategy may be a useful way to deliver public issues education. A partnership might be formed by two or more organizations committed to a non-advocacy educational approach: Cooperative Extension and a state or local League of Women Voters; town government and the public library. Or organizations with differing stakes and positions on an issue might agree to form a coalition that would work to inform all interested parties about the issue.

Partnerships can provide better access to people, information, money and other resources and can gather more diverse audiences. They may be able to produce programs which:

1. incorporate multiple perspectives on the issues being considered
2. ensure balance or fairness in the treatment of each perspective on the issue
3. include both technical information and process assistance
4. reach multiple audiences, including citizens and policy makers and groups on different sides of an issue
5. address issues selected or defined by citizens or policy makers rather than by educators?²⁸

(Most of these points are among the essential elements listed at the end of Chapter 2. You may want to use that complete list of elements as a guide for deciding whether a partnership will contribute to a better program.)

These are important qualities in public issues education programs. They can be accomplished by a single organization working alone, but can often be carried out more easily or effectively through joint efforts.

Organizations of many kinds now realize that even their competitors are potential collaborators.

An example is an Extension organization and League of Women Voters in the same state that brought farm and nonfarm people together for roundtable discussions of issues related to agriculture and the environment. Extension's contribution to the project included providing expertise on the issues and access to rural audiences, while the League furnished experience in facilitating roundtable discussions and better access to urban and suburban audiences. Project leaders from both organizations were adamant that they could not have carried out the project without the other organization.

Creating a partnership takes time, and may not deliver all that is expected. Educators need to consider carefully both the benefits and the costs of working with other organizations.

Deciding to develop a coalition

Here are five steps you can take in developing a coalition for public issues education:

Step 1: Decide whether you need a coalition to accomplish your public issues education objective. To do this, consider the following questions:

- Can you, by working alone, reach all the individuals or groups that are involved in or affected by the issue and involve them in meaningful public dialogue?
- Do you have access to all the relevant information?
- Are you or your organization perceived as having a particular bias with regard to the issue? (That is, are you credible?)
- Do you have adequate resources as well as the talent, creativity and motivation to undertake an independent public issues education effort, including the necessary process skills and educational delivery strategies to involve all the relevant stakeholders?
- Are enough different groups and individuals concerned about the issue so that the community's interest is best served by presenting all of the diverse perspectives equitably and fairly?
- Would the visibility of a new issue be enhanced if the stakeholders came together before sides were drawn or the issue framed by the media?

Step 2: Weigh both the potential advantages and disadvantages of a public issues education coalition.

There are many advantages to working in educational coalitions, but there are also disadvantages. The major advantages have been summarized as limits, leverage and learning.²⁹ Limits refers to the fact that organizations and individuals are limited in the resources they need to adequately educate the public on complex and contentious issues. Leverage means that, working together, individuals and groups can bring more attention to a project or increase its influence or perceived importance. Learning addresses the dynamic relationship that develops among a diverse group of individuals who commit time, energy and resources to carving out a shared understanding of a complex issue.

The disadvantages of coalitions may include:

- a loss of identity for your organization as it blends with others in the coalition
- difficulty demonstrating your independent educational impact
- a lack of appropriate recognition for your organization's contribution.

Also, working together on an educational task may require more time, more talent and more tact than working alone.

Step 3: Assess your own ability to work in a coalition.

Working in a partnership with others is not always easy, even for the most ardent believer in the collaborative process. Coalition building, like public issues education itself, will not appeal to everyone. If you find yourself answering “yes” to all or most of the following questions, you are likely to see the value of bringing a public issues education group together in your community. If you respond negatively to many of the questions, you may decide to limit your public issues education efforts to those activities you and your organization can do alone.

- Do you have a high tolerance for ambiguity and the ability to deal with uncertainty? (Changes in today’s society have been described as “continual white water.” In this treacherous environment, our traditional ways of knowing and doing may no longer keep us afloat. The “out-of-control” sensation may be stronger in a coalition.)
- Are you willing to share the limelight as well as the credit with others?
- Are you able to devote the necessary time to a coalition?
- Are you at a stage in your professional career where the risks involved in collaboration are acceptable to you?
- How quickly do you need to see the results of your efforts? (Coalitions seldom produce short-term impacts.)
- Do you really believe that collaboration is the way to go or do you see red flags when the word “coalition” is mentioned?
- Do you value the diverse perspectives that surround most contentious issues?

Benefits of working with the right organizational partner

These are some of the benefits reported by partnerships that conducted educational programs about public issues?:³⁰

- Reached an expanded and more diverse audience.
- Experimented with a new educational format (e.g., roundtable discussions).
- Worked across disciplinary lines to develop project materials.
- Developed more balanced materials with respect to the policy alternatives presented.
- Incorporated both technical content and process assistance in project materials and events.
- Brought multiple, diverse players together in discussions of issues that required such involvement for issue resolution.
- Enhanced the credibility of the project through joint sponsorship.
- Enabled greater risk taking because risk was shared among several organizations.
- Catalyzed action rather than remaining satisfied with intellectual discussion.

Step 4: Consider the type of structure needed to accomplish your public issues education goals.

Coalitions or partnerships can vary widely in their degree of formality. The range includes (1) informal networks, primarily for exchanging information; (2) cooperation in specific short-term projects (3) coordinating partnerships involving greater commitment of resources; and (3) collaborations characterized by formal structure and shared power. (See sidebar) Consider the simplest structure first (a public issues education network). If that will not meet the educational need, consider cooperation or the still more formal relationships inherent in a coordinating partnership or a truly collaborative public issues education effort. Remember that building and maintaining a complex organizational structure makes the coalition process more difficult, but increases the chance that your efforts will make a sustained educational impact.

Step 5: Understand the stages through which a public issues education partnership develops.

The collaborative process usually moves through three major phases: (1) problem-setting, (2) direction-setting, and (3) implementation³². Problem-setting is the phase in which participants identify problems and goals, contact potential coalition partners, and make initial commitments (including resources). Direction-setting refers to joint agreement on specifics of what the coalition will do and how it will be carried out. Steps in direction-setting include agreeing upon ground rules and operating procedures, organizing subgroups or task forces, gathering information and hammering out mutual agreements. Finally, the implementation phase calls for developing mechanisms that get the work done, cultivating and maintaining internal and external support from coalition members' own organizations, and monitoring progress.

*Types of structures and their characteristics*³¹

Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily for information exchange Easy to join leave Informal structure and procedures Members maintain organizational autonomy Resources shared: ideas, news, and reports
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple but specific purpose involved Staffed by low or middle level personnel Project-specific: does not affect mission or organization Often a one-time effort Few resources are committed
Coordinating partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires establishment of shared, common goals Goals usually are project specific and not long-term More stable membership: joining or leaving makes a difference Structure and procedures more formalized Participation by senior level staff More real resources committed (staff time, funds, and materials) High payback and risk
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex and long-term purpose shared by all members Strong policy and program linkages among members Decision power (regarding resource allocations) shared Formalized structure and procedures (bylaws) Individual organizations' autonomy diminished Staff time and funds are shared Higher payback and risk

Throughout these phases, coalitions need nurturing. Skill and knowledge of the process are critical. Projects funded by the Kellogg Foundation that involved coalitions adopted these nurturing techniques: (1) allocating time and energy for the coalition; (2) obtaining leadership from skilled facilitators who struck a balance between keeping things moving and making sure that all voices were heard; and (3) showing willingness to work behind the scenes (and between meetings) to make sure that each member's interests were understood and responded to.³³

As some writers have stated, coalitions need to simultaneously address the issues of "identity development" and "doing productive work."³⁴ Participants should strive for balance between the development of common identity and the more action-oriented activities needed to make significant accomplishments.

Teams and coalitions as learners

Partnerships to plan and deliver public issues education usually focus on educating other people; any self-education or mutual education that occurs is incidental, or viewed as a step toward reaching a larger audience. Sometimes, however, the most useful type of coalition is one in which the members' primary intention is to educate themselves. This may take the form of a study group or study circle, task force, problem solving group, or hybrid with a name like "Community Coalition to Address _____ [name of local problem or issue]."

"Political coalitions" comprise many of the coalitions designed primarily to influence public policy. What implications do political coalitions have for educators, and how should educators relate to them?

Political coalitions include "advocacy coalitions," which unite to promote a common interest, and "consensus-seeking coalitions," which bring diverse parties together to look for common ground on a contentious issue.³⁵ Advocacy coalitions are the most common type of political coalition, but as frustration increases over the inability to get decisions on controversial issues, consensus-seeking coalitions appear more frequently. A common goal is to develop policy positions or recommendations that stand a good chance of adoption because they have been discussed and approved by each of the conflicting parties.

Some types of coalitions may overlap; others may even evolve into something different. For example, a coalition created for mutual education—if successful—may evolve into a consensus-seeking coalition. The new coalition would begin to use a process of collaborative, interest-based problem solving. It might identify a preferred alternative (course of action) which it would promote to policy makers or the broader public. At this stage, the group would have evolved into an advocacy coalition.

In almost all cases, public issues educators will want to avoid association with narrowly-focused advocacy coalitions, since they most likely will not be interested in a balanced treatment of issues. A consensus-seeking coalition, on the other hand, offers important possibilities for educators. In this setting, dialogue can lead to increased mutual understanding. The development of such alliances may be an appropriate long-term goal for a public issues education program. Coalitions that develop educational programs for others may be able to accomplish their objectives more quickly. But coalitions working on the mutual education of members representing all sides of an issue hold greater promise of significant impact on the issues. Their work is more difficult, but the payoff is often greater.³⁶

The role of the public issues educator with respect to educational or consensus-seeking coalitions may need to be chosen carefully. Depending on the coalition's degree of balance, an educator may need to decide whether to be a member of or simply a resource for the coalition. Moreover, since educational coalitions can evolve into either consensus-seeking or advocacy coalitions, an educator needs to keep in mind that his or her relationship with a coalition may need to be reassessed any time such a shift occurs.³⁷

Keep in mind six rules of thumb for building a successful coalition.

- Think "win-win": Believe in and communicate the benefits of working together.
- Do your homework. Know the history and the current context of the issue and the relationships of the various players.
- Be open to new ideas and people.
- Think hard about your coalition's purpose and choose an appropriate structure to achieve it.
- Be honest. Help build a shared vision and trust. Share credit.
- Seek objective, ongoing feedback about how things are going and use that information to make needed changes.

Science and dialogue: Blending technical information and process assistance

Bringing relevant and credible scientific information to public discourse on issues is one of the most valuable contributions that public issues education makes. Contributing the information, however, can sometimes be complicated by a number of factors, such as:

- the public attitude toward science and scientists
- competing viewpoints about acceptable risks and ways to manage them
- the extent of cooperation between scientists and process facilitators.

Several ways exist for you as a public issues educator to ensure that your project includes good information inputs.

- Select appropriate experts (and print and electronic materials).
- Brief information presenters, drawing attention to the concerns raised in this section.
- Guide the process toward a shared, credible information base that combines multi-disciplinary scientific knowledge, local knowledge and procedural information.

The sections that follow describe some of the challenges of delivering substantive information and specific ways to address them.

Content and process assistance

Public issues education requires a blend of what is often referred to as “content” and “process.” Content—substantive information about issues—helps participants in an educational program decide on an issue’s importance and possible courses of action to address the topic.

Substantive information may cover existing conditions and trends, causes of problems, different groups’ positions and strategies, alternative solutions, evidence about the likely consequences of different alternatives, or case studies of solutions that have worked in other settings.

Process assistance, on the other hand, is help in communicating, learning, understanding the policy making process, and taking effective action. Process assistance enables or facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and the translation of knowledge into action. It includes the facilitation of dialogue about public issues, help in understanding the policy making process and in identifying opportunities to become involved, and guidance in taking the steps necessary to translate learning into action.

Simply providing information about an issue may be sufficient for some audiences. High-level policy makers, for example, may need technical information, not process assistance, about an issue. Once they receive the needed information, they know perfectly well how to use it. Many other participants, however, need more than “just the facts.” They may need an opportunity to sort through the facts, discuss them, hear what others think, try out their own ideas on others, learn about the policy making process, or get help or encouragement in translating what they’ve learned into action. Even high-level policy makers may need assistance in conflict resolution. However, help on the process side is rarely sufficient by itself. Sometimes, a good facilitator who knows

nothing about an issue can be helpful. But good information is often in short supply, and the policy making process bogs down because of its absence. Facts alone seldom resolve a conflict, but the absence of credible, trusted information sometimes makes resolution impossible. Finding the best way to blend these two types of assistance is a constant challenge for public issues educators.

Science and the public

The challenge of blending process assistance and information about issues is complicated by communication barriers between experts and non-experts. Science-based information has long held a favored position in public policy making, as policy makers have turned to experts for advice about increasingly complex public issues.

But levels of trust and confidence in scientific information have eroded in recent decades. In general, trust in scientific information remains high, but exceptions occur with increasing frequency—especially at times of controversy over scientific issues.³⁸ Such controversies often expose conflicting viewpoints between different experts or scientific disciplines. They have also called attention to problems, such as health and environmental risks, that appear to be the result of events previously billed as scientific advances. Under such conditions, citizen groups increasingly insist on an independent voice in policy making.

The need to establish an acceptable database for multi-stakeholder issue analysis has led groups to accept certain sets of information as credible and others as “not credible.” Even if both sets are provided by competent scientists, one interest group may be unwilling to accept another’s data. In such a situation, facilitation and guidance may be needed in order for the differing interest groups to agree on a single set of information with which to work.

Risk assessment

Controversies over the seriousness of a risk (for example, food safety, hazardous waste management) bring these citizen-scientist tensions to the fore. Assessing risk is a complex discipline not fully understood by experts, much less by the public.³⁹ Many studies of risk assessment reveal that citizens and scientists often fail to see eye to eye on the questions that ought to be investigated. Risk assessment

In many cases, citizens are not disagreeing with the experts' "facts," but rather are simply interested in different questions than the ones the experts investigated.

experts typically focus on "hazard"—a combination of how bad a risk is and how likely it is to happen. Such experts often criticize citizens for focusing on "subjective," "emotional" judgments of risk, but a number of studies have suggested that what is more likely happening is that citizens look at risk through a completely different set of criteria.

Closer attention to citizens' arguments reveals that, in many cases, citizens are not disagreeing with the experts' "facts," but rather are simply interested in different questions than the ones the experts investigated.⁴⁰ While experts focus on "hazard," citizens are motivated by "outrage." Citizens may believe, for example, that decisions should be based not simply on how big and how likely a risk is, but also on whether the anticipated benefits are worth even a small risk; whether the risks are unfairly borne by some people for the benefit of others; or how catastrophic an outcome would be if it did occur, even if the actual likelihood is small. Such concerns go beyond the questions addressed by the experts, yet they are not necessarily "irrational" or "foolish."

Public issues educators often get caught in the middle of such controversies. This is especially true with complex issues in which scientific expert advice is critical, and citizens simultaneously have strong concerns and doubts that science is on their side. You may find it difficult to remain neutral, or be perceived as neutral, in the face of such circumstances because you will be viewed as the purveyor of the information. Also, of course, public issues educators are often identified in the public mind with the scientific or expert community.

Merging scientific and "local" knowledge

Often, issues are resolved by setting policies based on policy makers' judgments and experts' recommendations; then the policies are announced and defended against public attack. Recently, such exclusion of the broader public has come under increasing criticism. On many controversial issues, decision making needs to be open to a greater diversity of viewpoints (the public's, as well as experts') and to a wider range of what are regarded as "facts."⁴¹ This is partly a question of who will be involved, but it is also a matter of integrating different types of knowledge: scientific facts (from various disciplines), people's values and opinions and "local knowledge" based on personal experience.

As a public issues educator, you can help by:

- identifying experts who acknowledge the value of other inputs;
- briefing experts about the broader picture;
- facilitating more constructive communication among experts, citizens, and policy makers.

Educational programs in which citizens can gain a more realistic understanding of both the worth and the limitations of research-based knowledge are needed. Experts need help fitting their contributions into a larger context in which a multitude of factors, including but not limited to scientific facts, play a role in public decision making.

Providing information

The starting point in deciding what information to include in an educational program is to ask, "What information is needed?" (not, "What information is available?"). Traditional approaches often begin by collecting and analyzing data to identify problems and bring them to the attention of policy makers. This is true, for example, in the case of nutrition monitoring.⁴² Such approaches often fail to have much impact on decision making. An alternative approach is to begin by identifying issues and the decisions that will need to be made to address them. The information needs of decision makers and other stakeholders can then be anticipated and used to guide the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.⁴³

Information needs will be different at different stages in the policy making process. In the beginning, information may be required about current conditions, trends, causes of problems, or effects on different individuals and groups. Later in the process, information needs may shift to alternative solutions, evidence predicting the consequences of various alternatives, or, still later, evaluation results.

Different audiences may also call for different information. Before providing information or seeking experts to participate in an educational program, you should think carefully about what the intended participants need to know to move ahead in the process. It is often worthwhile to involve program participants in seeking out relevant expertise.

Another consideration is the format for presenting information. Oral presentations by experts are standard, but many other possibilities exist, including:

- panels of experts with different viewpoints
- issue books, such as those prepared as background for National Issues Forum discussions
- compilation of relevant demographic data
- synthesis of library research
- study circles to investigate an issue
- Delphi techniques to identify the information upon which the experts can agree
- participatory research, in which program participants collect and analyze their own data.

Scientific facts are often boring and meaningless in the absence of appropriate interpretation.

Ideally, experts will be available throughout an educational or policy making process that may extend over many months. But many experts are not willing or able to make such an extensive commitment. One solution is for an educator in the local setting to provide continuity between visits or other forms of input from the experts. Another solution is to carefully select media for the specialists' communications, including fact sheets, videotape and electronic mail. Channels should also be open for the public to interact with information providers through some form of media.⁴⁴

Facilitating communication between experts and non-experts

The most effective communication between experts and non-experts occurs when the experts:

- know, respect, and respond to the concerns of their audience
- clarify what is fact and what is interpretation
- find ways to help program participants understand the methods they use to gather and interpret data
- avoid repetition unless it clarifies something.

Even though factual information is generally the expert's strong suit, it is important to keep in mind that facts are seldom the main thing in which program participants are interested. Scientific facts are often boring and meaningless in the absence of appropriate interpretation.

A soil scientist, for example, in studying the application of solid waste compost to agricultural land, extrapolates many facts about the "milligrams per kilogram" of chemicals in the tissues of corn plants. Residents in the area where the study is being conducted are highly interested in these findings. But simply reporting data does not tell the residents what they want to know. What most residents want instead is interpretation—not how many milligrams per kilogram of this or that chemical, but rather, are those levels safe? Moreover, they want to be able to trust the interpretation.

Trusting the scientific expert

Think about what would satisfy residents' concerns about a scientist's trustworthiness.

Distinguish fact, interpretation

First of all, people looking for information they can trust are not likely to be satisfied with information providers who blur the boundary between fact and interpretation. Therefore, the scientist should clearly distinguish between the two. Ideally, data interpretation might be a collaborative process in which experts and interested citizens participate together.

The expert's methods

Another way to help build public trust in scientific information is to provide the public with an opportunity to understand something of the expert's methods. (This does not mean that the public is expected to make qualified judgments about the methods' adequacy, but simply that getting a glimpse of how scientists do their work is part of what judgments of trustworthiness are based upon). Most important to the public is seeing something of the methods used in making interpretations (in other words, not just the methods used in collecting and analyzing data). Explaining methods in understandable and interesting terms is not easy (and is something experts are not often called upon to do).

Concern and understanding

A third element in building trustworthiness is evidence that information providers actually care about program participants and understand their situations and values. That's why it is important for information providers to know their audience. The soil scientist mentioned earlier needs to understand what participants in the educational programs want to know, and why. He needs to respect their concerns (even if he doesn't agree with them), and to address those concerns explicitly with the information he provides.

Taking steps to enhance the trustworthiness of information is relatively easy when information providers are working with familiar audiences. The soil scientist, for example, might quite naturally care about agricultural producers, respect their concerns, and present his information in ways that address them. The harder, but highly stimulating, challenge that public issues education presents for him is to practice the same level of caring, respect and responsiveness with nonfarm residents, environmentalists, and other participants who have interests potentially at odds with those of the producers.

Challenges for information providers

In the context of public issues, experts need to realize that information is never neutral. It doesn't help to say, "This is neutral, objective, pure, unadulterated science, devoid of any personal values or opinions." Every piece of information will be good news for people on some sides of an issue and bad news for others. The best information in the world won't make a conflict go away. Value differences as well as factual ones need to be resolved if parties are to reach a mutually acceptable decision.

Clarifying alternatives and consequences can help in coping with these realities. Communication from experts to program participants on conflicting sides of public issues is more likely to be effective if the experts present a range of alternatives and avoid describing the likely consequences as "pros" or "cons," "advantages" or "disadvantages." (Advantages from one side's perspective are likely to be disadvantages to others.) Experts can also improve the effectiveness of their communications by showing concern for people on sides of the issues that will be hurt by their information. It can also help if experts let people know they are aware that information is only part of the answer—that other considerations, including the reactions and value judgments of the participants themselves, will influence the ultimate outcome.

Some experts have a hard time understanding or accepting these characteristics of public policy making. In many cases, they have studied an issue intensively and have strong opinions about how to resolve it. Their opinions are usually based on assumptions about the common good and how to maintain it, so they are often annoyed and surprised when program participants object to their presentations or perceive them as biased. Experts sometimes also have a hard time

Every piece of information will be good news for people on some sides of an issue and bad news for others.

understanding or accepting the fact that public decisions are allowed to be influenced by so many other factors beside "good information."

When the planners of an educational program discover that the best available experts are unable or unwilling to adhere to the model of balanced education, one possible solution is to pursue balance by including specialists advocating a range of solutions.⁴⁵ The most effective educational programs of this type are not debates between experts, but presentations that enable program participants to see where the experts agree and where they disagree. (It often turns out that the differences are mainly conflicting interpretations rather than disagreements about the facts.)

Despite the challenges described above, many specialists find that they derive substantial benefits from being involved with public issues education. Among them are identifying new research areas, forming new interdisciplinary connections, and seeing their knowledge applied to the solution of practical problems.⁴⁶

Collaborative conflict resolution with polarized groups

Our political culture is not “good” at handling conflict. Most of us find conflict distasteful and possess a corresponding lack of skill in dealing with it. Discomfort in dealing with conflict is one of the biggest barriers to effective policy making, and is also a major obstacle for public issues educators.

Public issues persist because they are controversial, so the knowledge that there are systematic ways to handle conflict is important assurance for the educator. This section includes guidelines and techniques for Interest-based Problem Solving (IBPS), the one approach from Chapter 2 that addresses conflict most directly.

Even if the level of conflict is low, the following section should prove useful. IBPS is also one of the most complete approaches to dealing with any issue, even when conflict has not yet erupted. The presentation here includes advice on identifying interested parties, defining the problem, generating alternatives, and other steps which are relevant whatever the level of conflict.

Public issues persist because they are controversial.

Problems in handling conflict

Especially in the realm of public affairs, we tend to ignore or repress our disagreements with others, hoping they will either go away, “work themselves out,” or disappear with a technical fix. The consequence, however, is not an absence of conflict. On the contrary, we are surrounded by ever more of it. And when conflict does occur, it tends to be explosive, antagonistic and emotional. Not knowing how to deal with it in easy, comfortable ways, we tend to keep it in check until we realize that a decision we won’t be able to live with is about to be made. Then we blow up. Lacking the necessary experience and skill to register objections coolly and effectively, we end up triggering equal and opposite reactions from those who disagree with our point of view.

In the typical pattern of conflict escalation in public policy making, people on different sides of contentious issues “concern themselves with their own needs without giving serious attention to satisfying the needs of the other stakeholders.” Communication is designed to influence decision makers. Conflicting parties fail to genuinely listen to and try to understand

each other. Information is one-sided, and communications are full of misunderstandings. “The use of information becomes strategic rather than educational...” as each side tries to discredit the other’s data, methods and experts. If the news media become involved, the opponents “use interviews, press releases and staged events to attract additional support.” Authorities are asked to decide which side is right, so that the range of choices is limited to a yes or no vote on one side’s proposal or the other.

Success in finding ways to get conflicts on the table in a more constructive manner was a major difference between Community 1 and Community 2 as described in Chapter 1. To help in the policy making process, you should personally strive to feel more comfortable with conflict. With that goal in mind, the following pages revisit the Interest-based Problem Solving Model.

Dispute resolution in the public arena

Over the past decade, dispute resolution processes, such as mediation, negotiated rule making, and policy dialogues, have become more common features on the public policy landscape at every level of government. These processes, sometimes referred to by catch-all titles such as alternative dispute resolution or collaborative problem solving, have been most commonly used for the purpose of resolving intense controversies when decisions are needed promptly.⁴⁸ Issues regarding facility siting, non-point source pollution, and endangered species are common examples.

Negotiation, mediation, arbitration

Dispute resolution processes include negotiation, mediation, and arbitration. All are methods of reaching a decision.

Negotiation commonly refers to consensual agreements worked out *among* the disputing parties themselves. Mediation refers to assistance provided by third parties who are more or less neutral. Arbitration refers to decision making that is imposed by third parties who resolve the issues unilaterally after hearing and weighing arguments made by each of the disputing parties.

Dispute resolution emphasizes resolving public issues through citizen participation processes, interest-based problem solving, and consensus building.

- Citizen participation processes are planned procedures designed to bring citizens together with representatives of public and private organizations to make public choices.
- Interest-based negotiation emphasizes the awareness of one's own and other parties' "interests," rather than "positions" or "proposed solutions."
- Consensus building is a method for making decisions that all members of a group can support. The method encourages mutual education, the creation of joint knowledge, the generation of multiple options, and the selection of an option that satisfies mutual interests.

Dispute resolution methods have been developed primarily for the purpose of getting decisions made, but mediation in particular can be a useful tool for educators as well. When issues heat up, the "teachable moment" may be lost because participants are unwilling to listen to the other side. Dispute resolution methods can help "extend" the teachable moment by providing an atmosphere for more constructive exploration of differing viewpoints and possible solutions.⁴⁹ Similar methods can also help when issues are less heated or urgent, to "head off" situations that might become explosive.

Focus on interests, not positions

The difference between interests and positions is crucial in attempting to negotiate solutions that are acceptable to all parties involved in a dispute. The central principle underlying dispute resolution approaches is that we resolve issues by satisfying interests. Understanding why interests are important and how they can be used in conflict situations requires seeing a fundamental distinction between issues, interests and positions.

- *Issues* are the "what" of negotiations—what the parties disagree about
- *Interests* are the "why" of negotiations—why each party wants what it wants and feels strongly about it
- *Positions* are the "how" of negotiations—statements about how an issue might be addressed.

The following story provides an example⁵⁰:

Two men were quarreling in a library. One wanted the window open, the other wanted it closed. They bickered back and forth over how much to leave it open: just a crack, halfway, three-quarters. They were arguing so loudly the librarian came over to find out what was the matter. She asked one man why he wanted the window open. He replied: "To get some fresh air." She asked the other why he wanted it closed. He said, "To avoid a draft." After thinking a moment, the librarian left, went into the next room, and threw open the window, bringing in fresh air without a draft.

The two men viewed their problem as a conflict over positions and limited their discussion to those positions. If the librarian also had focused only on the two men's stated positions, the dispute would not have been resolved with both men receiving benefits. By looking instead at the men's underlying interests, the librarian invented a mutually acceptable solution.

We resolve issues by satisfying interests.

Focusing on interests helps the parties in a dispute to:

- get beyond a win-lose approach centered on arguments over positions
- develop a collaborative approach, searching for common interests or interests that do not conflict
- respond more effectively to emotional outbursts by acknowledging and validating the underlying interests
- stay in touch with their motivation to reach agreement
- develop agreements that are more durable because they meet the interests of all parties.⁵¹

PRE-NEGOTIATION PHASE

1. Getting started
2. Representation
3. Ground rules and agenda
4. Problem definition
5. Joint fact-finding

NEGOTIATION PHASE

6. Criteria development
7. Generating alternatives
8. Evaluation and creating agreements
9. Binding the parties to the agreements
10. Producing a written agreement
11. Ratification

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

12. Linking information agreements to formal decision making
13. Monitoring implementation

Steps in the process

Collaborative conflict resolution processes generally involve three phases:

- pre-negotiation, when stakeholders set the conditions for collaborative problem-solving
- negotiation, when the stakeholders work together to create, choose and document solutions
- implementation, when public authorities adopt, implement, evaluate and possibly re-negotiate the solutions reached by stakeholders.

Within each phase, the parties work through several steps or activities as they try to build consensus for a final agreement. The steps are not mandatory, however; the collaborative conflict resolution process must remain flexible to be adapted quickly to a particular situation. The following section describes the steps in the process³² and suggest a number of techniques that educators and mediators have found useful in key stages.

Pre-negotiation

1 Getting started. Someone has to raise the possibility of dispute resolution and initiate the process. If no stakeholder is willing to approach the others to suggest that they attempt to reach agreement, a trusted outsider (“convener”) might be able to make this suggestion. One way to help parties decide if collaboration is in their best interest is to help them determine their BATNA, or Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. Identifying the expected results of the process can help participants think about potential positive outcomes of the problem solving process. In addition, as participants learn how other disputants expect to use the agreement, a sense of trust in the process and in the other participants can begin to develop.

Techniques you can use to identify how participants will use the outcome of the process:

- Define the potential products. “If we come to an agreement, what form would the agreement be in?”
- How might we use the agreement when it is developed?
- How might each party use the agreement?

2 Representation. Answers must be found to the following questions: Can the key players be identified? Are they willing and able to collaborate with the other parties? Can legitimate spokespersons be found for stakeholder groups? Do reasonable deadlines exist? Which issues are negotiable? Do sufficient resources exist to support the effort? Identify parties who have an interest in the outcome. Include interests which could be affected, as well as parties who might prevent any agreement from being implemented.

Techniques for identifying all affected parties:

List the individuals and groups who:

- could claim legal standing
- have political clout to draw elected and appointed officials into the dispute
- could block implementation of an agreement
- have sufficient "moral claim" to gain the public's sympathy.

3 Establishing ground rules and setting the agenda. Before parties begin substantive negotiations, they should agree on ground rules for communicating, decision making, and organizing the process. They also need to agree on objectives for the process and on the issue agenda. Agreeing on these matters provides the first opportunity for participants to have a positive experience in the problem solving process. The procedural agreements lay the groundwork for achieving fairness for all parties.

Purposes of procedural agreements:

- identifying the process to be used in addressing conflict
- articulating specific behaviors that will and will not be tolerated within the group
- determining the steps to take in the problem solving process
- providing acceptable procedures to use when disputants begin to argue over substantive issues.

Examples of possible ground rules:

- not speaking all at once
- stating something only once
- recording a group memory
- sharing information with interest groups
- creating the agenda
- sharing leadership opportunities
- agreeing on the need for a facilitator and recorder
- agreeing on how the group will make decisions—consensus or majority vote.

4 Defining the problem. Often each party has a different perception of exactly what the problem really is. How we define the problem often leads us down a road toward one type of solution. It is important in this stage to clarify the problem from each party's point of view. History, present status, and need for change are important elements in defining the issue. It is also important to legitimize all perceptions, understanding that each definition of the problem could be "right" and that each definition of the problem might yield a different "right answer." If any of the participants believes that his or her point of view is not being treated as legitimate, the process is very likely to break down.

Techniques for defining the problem:

- Legitimize the issue: "What do you see as the problem?" Accept the fact that each person may see the problem differently. Write down each definition of the problem so all can see.
- Find out how your definition of the problem makes you feel.
- Identify the real problem.
- Whose problem is this? Can/should we deal with it?
- Best/worst/most probable: What is the best and worst possible thing that might happen if we solve this problem?
- Define the problem in terms of a question: "How can we address this issue? How can we solve this problem?"
- Clarify definitions of the words used. It is very important that each person understand what is meant.
- Is/is not: What is and is not part of the problem?
- Ask the group to draw a picture of the problem, including who is affected.

5 Joint fact-finding. The parties must agree on what technical background information is pertinent to the dispute, what is known and not known about the technical issues, and on the methods to be used for generating answers to relevant technical questions. It is important to identify what is known about why the problem exists and how different parties are affected. This step involves the parties completing the following tasks determining what information they have regarding the issue; identifying the portion of the information that is accepted as accurate by all the parties; and determining what additional information, if any, they need to negotiate effectively. Filling gaps might involve input from experts or the sharing of information known or collected by the parties themselves. This step is ongoing.

Techniques to identify and clarify knowledge gaps:

- Break down the problem into manageable parts.
- What are all the forces keeping it from getting worse? Who wants to perpetuate the problem? Who wants it to change?

In these pre-negotiation stages, public issues educators might use needs assessment techniques, including telephone contacts and informal meetings, to identify parties and determine if they have an interest in the issue. Discussion of how the process will be conducted and what the educator's role will be is critical.

Clarifying the problem from each party's point of view, legitimizing the various viewpoints, defining the problem, the history of the issue, and the need for change can be done through an expanded needs assessment or applied research project. Each stakeholder group's knowledge of the issue, objectives, willingness to participate, and thoughts on possible outcomes of the negotiation process can be assessed through group or individual interviews by telephone or face-to-face. (In general, in-person interviews are preferable for establishing trust and a good working relationship.) Interview results can be analyzed and used to educate stakeholder groups on each other's perspectives. A summary paper can be mailed to the parties. An overview of stakeholder perspectives can be an effective part of the introduction when stakeholder groups convene for negotiation.⁵³

Negotiation

6 Developing criteria. To invent options for mutual gain, the parties must clearly state their interests to each other. Rather than asserting "positions"—what they want as a solution—stakeholders seeking a resolution to a policy dispute need to be able to discuss their "interests"—the reasons, needs, concerns and motivations underlying their positions. What are the major needs or interests that must be satisfied for everyone to agree on any solution? Interests constitute the reason "why" something is important. For example, lack of noise in the evening hours may be an interest or criterion; land use decisions might be the solution or position which determines how that particular interest is satisfied. Satisfying one another's interests should be the common goal of the parties' dispute resolution efforts. All should consent to use the agreed-upon interests as performance criteria in developing and judging alternative solutions.

Techniques to identify interests:

- Bottom-line: What is most important about this issue for you? What would it be like if the problem were solved? What do you want? Why do you want it? Continually ask, "Why is this important?" Each person in the group must have a chance to add his or her needs or interests to the list. The list becomes a set of criteria against which the alternative solutions are judged.
- Possible questions to draw out the interests of the parties: What does it mean to you that...? What would happen if...? What are the most important things about...? What do you want [the other party] to understand about...? How do you feel when...?

- **Consensus:** It is important that everyone be able to live with the list of criteria. "This does not mean that each criterion is important to you, but it does mean that you will respect each of the needs or interests incorporated in the agreement and work toward their accomplishment."

7 **Generating alternatives.** After the necessary information has been obtained and accepted and everyone's interests have been stated, the parties can agree to a period of "inventing without deciding." Brainstorming can be used to produce as many ideas as possible for solving the problem. It is important that all parties be able to suggest ideas and solutions. The ideas put forth at this time can include the parties' "positions." During this step, all must agree that they will not judge ideas or hold someone to any of the options. Creativity, not commitment, is encouraged at this stage.

Techniques for generating alternatives:

- **Brainstorming:** Share ideas, but don't evaluate them. Record the ideas where everyone can view them.
- **Braindrain:** brainstorming with a time limit of 2-3 minutes. Groups compete with each other to generate the most ideas in a short time.
- **"What I like about..."** After brainstorming, give positive feedback on each idea.
- **Generate ideas using 5 x 7 cards** posted on the wall. Each person is asked to answer "what if" or future-oriented questions and post their answers. Example: "In two years, residents and environmentalists agreed that these ideas worked best to.... What are the three ideas?"
- **Form small groups, mixing participants** representing opposing interests. Give them the job of designing a solution based upon the criteria.

8 **Evaluating and creating agreements.** Once the parties feel they have invented enough options, they must decide which ones to include in a proposed agreement. To do this, they might develop joint criteria for ranking the ideas, make trades across different issues, and/or combine different options to form "packages" of agreements. The educator or mediator might re-emphasize that interests become criteria for evaluating alternatives and then suggest possible agreement packages for the group to consider. Sometimes, an agreement can be divided into parts, and subcommittees can be asked to prepare each part. The key is that the major interests or needs have been satisfied.

Techniques for conducting evaluations and creating agreements:

- **Consensus:** Consensus is based on the term "to consent" or "to grant permission." The solution may not be "my first choice," but I will "live with" the decision. Consensus means there is some level of commitment to implement the agreement.
- **Both/and:** Perhaps we don't have to choose between alternatives; there might be a way to build a solution from several ideas.
- **Straw voting:** Get a sense of how the participants feel.
- **Survey:** Ask, "What would it take for you to live with the decision?" Do not ask, "Why don't you like it?"
- **Negative voting:** Is there any suggestion that would be unacceptable under any circumstances?
- **Focus on agreements first:** What have we agreed on? Agreements ensure fairness by involving participants and establishing a sense of ownership and equity.

9 **Binding the parties to their agreements.** An important part of creating an effective agreement to resolve a dispute is developing provisions to ensure that the parties will honor the terms of that agreement. Every party must be assured that the others will carry out their part. This generally requires carefully sequencing the required actions and performance measures. Parties must discuss and agree upon methods for making such assurances tangible. It may help to include contingencies in the agreement to cover unforeseen circumstances or one party's failure to uphold the agreement.

10 **Producing a written agreement.** The parties should document areas of agreement to ensure a common understanding of their accord, and to make certain that the terms can be remembered and communicated unambiguously. This step is crucial, for it ensures that the parties will not leave the negotiations with different interpretations of the agreement. Rather than each party drafting his or her version of what was agreed upon, it usually is best to use a "single-text procedure." This means that one negotiator (or a small subcommittee of the participants working with the facilitator) is designated to write a draft of the agreement. The draft is then circulated among the participants for comments and changes until all have approved it.

11 Ratification. The parties must get support for the agreement from organizations that have a role to play in carrying out the accord. These organizations should have been identified at the outset of the process and involved either directly or through adequate representation in the previous steps. When a negotiator represents a group of constituents, he or she must submit the written agreement for their approval. Although each organization will follow its own internal procedures as it reviews and adopts the settlement, the negotiating group should agree on the form of ratification that is necessary from each party.

The various negotiation stages are often combined in one or more meetings where representatives of groups with a stake in the issue convene. These meetings may include discussion of interview results, educating stakeholders on the various perspectives, and stakeholder representatives discussing their concerns, pertinent facts, criteria for evaluating decision and outcomes, alternative courses of action, and then selecting one or more courses of action. Group facilitation and conflict resolution techniques are important educational tools. Your role as the educator is to create a situation in which stakeholder groups educate each other and jointly work through these stages. You must take care to use neutral language. If parties are stymied in generating ideas, you may suggest some yourself, but refrain from suggesting only one. Results interviews conducted in the pre-negotiation phase can help you keep everyone on track. In addition, you can pay careful attention to the criteria the parties select to design an evaluation for the educational program.⁵⁴

Implementation

12 Linking informal agreements to formal decision making. A ratified agreement must be linked to the decision making procedures mandated by state statutes and local ordinances. How this takes place depends on the substance of the agreement and at what point in the required decision making process negotiation occurred. Decision makers should have been involved, or at least well-informed, all along in the process. If a decision maker is assured that all parties affected by an issue have agreed to a solution, and if the solution accords with the criteria the decision maker must use to make the decision, the agreement is likely to be approved.

13 Monitoring implementation. The parties must determine how they will keep track of the success of their solution. They must agree to standards for measuring compliance and a schedule for carrying out the monitoring process. Subcommittees can be charged with responsibility for monitoring and calling the parties back together if “troubleshooting” becomes necessary. A procedure to reconvene the parties to affirm outcomes, resolve problems, renegotiate terms, or celebrate success should be spelled out in the written agreement. Communication and collaboration should continue as the agreement is carried out.

For you, the public issues educator, the implementation stages may include additional applied research and educational programs. For example, implementing an agreement on a nonpoint source pollution control program may involve educators working with stakeholders to develop an educational program, prepare materials, and teach about “best management” plans. You might also assist in monitoring implementation through a for-

mal survey, follow-up interviews, discussion with participants, or other evaluation techniques.⁵⁵

Implications for educators' roles

In comparison with traditional approaches to public issues education, interest-based problem solving expands the roles available to educators.⁵⁶ Educators' traditional tools, such as needs assessment, applied research, community-based education, and program evaluation, remain relevant. The Information Provider and Technical Advisor roles, described in Chapter 1, continue to be appropriate, while the Facilitator role would be expanded from emphasis on small-group facilitation to “issue facilitation,” including assistance in collaboration and conflict resolution, citizen participation, and consensus building. Issue facilitation is clearly a legitimate role for educators, since it promotes the mutual education of involved parties as well as an opportunity to learn a new approach to the resolution of community conflict—different from litigation or arbitration.

In addition, two new roles would be added:⁵⁷

- Promoter of dispute resolution—one who suggests that the parties consider facilitated collaboration (and may also recommend competent facilitators)
- Mediator—one who actually performs the third-party role in dispute resolution, intervening, interposing, helping to reconcile differences, and working individually or collectively with the disputing parties to increase their skills in collaborative problem solving. Although not all public issues educators will have the ability or desire to actually become mediators, anyone can add the Promoter of Dispute Resolution role to their professional repertoire.

Public issues educators and the news media

The news media are most people's primary source of information about public issues. Because the media reach large and diverse audiences, they are an important resource and potential ally for public issues educators. As with other types of educational programs, news stories can help generate an audience. And the media offer opportunities for significant strides—or distortions—in people's understanding of public issues. Under favorable circumstances, the media can also be a vehicle for communicating a richer and more complex understanding of public issues to far more people than educators normally reach with face-to-face programs.

Criticisms of the news media

The news media do a good job of creating awareness of public issues, but are much less effective at helping citizens work through the issues. "Working through," according to Daniel Yankelovich, "...is necessary to transform relatively shallow, poorly informed public opinion into more fully considered and firmly held public judgment." He defines public judgment as "the state of highly developed public opinion that exists once people have engaged an issue, considered it from all sides, understood the choices it leads to, and accepted the full consequences of the choices they have made."⁵⁸

When citizens reach such a judgment, their opinions tend to be "stable" in the sense that they do not fluctuate from time to time or when poll takers change the wording of their questions. By contrast, on issues where a public judgment has not yet been reached, people's opinions are likely to change each time they are reminded of another possible consequence. (On protectionism, for instance, they tend to favor it if reminded about American workers' jobs, but to oppose it when ques-

tioned in the context of consumer prices.)⁵⁹ According to Yankelovich⁶⁰ "working through" to reach a public judgment requires information beyond what is normally available through the mass media, including:

- identifying an array of alternative choices
- clarifying the consequences of different choices
- maintaining attention to an issue until people have a chance to come to grips with it
- helping to interpret contradictory information and disagreements among the experts
- clarifying jargon, code words, and other language used in confusing ways
- conveying evidence that attention will be paid to citizens' views.

Interviews with the public indicate a similar desire for more help from the media. Studies relying on focus groups and in-depth interviews with ordinary citizens⁶¹ indicate that people want more help in knowing how important issues differ, how they affect "me and my family," how they affect others, and what causes the problems. They resent it when the media seem to drop a story before it's resolved. They want information that's credible—that rings true (and resent it when they feel that they're getting only part of the story), and they want balanced treatment of all sides. They know that issues are complicated, and they're suspicious of simplistic solutions. Finally, they want evidence of progress — a "sense of possibility." They complain about getting little guidance on what they can do and little evidence that anything they might do would make any difference.

Responding to media inquiries

To work effectively with the news media, the first skill that public issues educators need is the ability to respond effectively when reporters come to them for interviews, as may happen in connection with controversial issues. Preparation is the key to communicating effectively in these situations.

- If possible, think in advance about the points you want to make. Figure out how to make them concisely.
- Avoid making your points in the abstract. Use human examples.
- Write down your points concisely, so the reporter can take them back to the office.
- If you're surprised by the media on an issue, ask for a few minutes to compose your thoughts. Reporters face unrelenting deadlines, but, if you don't feel prepared, say so politely. Don't try to fake your way through an interview; it usually doesn't work.

In addition, public issues education calls for another important guideline. Any hope for effectively resolving public issues requires a fair and balanced understanding of multiple points of view. The media often fail to communicate that message clearly enough—portraying issues, instead, as two-sided conflicts. If you are contacted by news reporters, try to use the opportunity to promote the understanding of different perspectives—or at least to get across the idea that such understanding should be sought.

Responding to attacks against you or your program by a letter to the editor or other means is a special case. Often, the complainer will not be satisfied by any response, no matter how sensible or rational. Best advice: Wait a while; most people will forget the negative comments. The success of your program will speak for itself.

Initiating media strategies

In addition to reacting effectively when news reporters initiate contacts, you can also develop proactive communication strategies. Communication strategies often focus on either (1) persuading people to adopt a certain behavior; or (2) providing them with information considered important by the message sender, but not necessarily by the receivers.⁶² A strategy that is more likely to be appropriate in public

**“Who am I trying to reach and why?
What will their interest or reaction be?”**

issues education is the “two-way equity model,” which assumes that all involved parties have significant and important points of view that need to be included in the discussions.⁶³

Implementing the two-way equity model calls for the following steps:⁶⁴

- **Select the important audiences.** Marketers call this segmenting the audience. For example, if the objective is to stimulate discussion of a county-wide land use plan, audience segments might include local elected officials, land developers, landowners and environmentalists.
- **Determine objectives for each audience segment.** When a communication strategy is designed for persuasion, the objective might be to get an audience segment to buy a particular product; when the communication is for information transfer, the objective is for the audience to acquire certain facts. In public issues education, other objectives may be more appropriate: increased awareness or knowledge of problems, proposed solutions, or consequences of different alternatives; more active participation in discussions; greater appreciation of different perspectives on the issues; or identification of solutions likely to satisfy a wide range of interests.

- **Decide on the messages to be communicated.** Messages should be clear and focused. Although a goal of the two-way equity model is that there be (“no secrets”—in other words, full information for everyone—it will still be necessary to tailor messages to the interests, goals and starting points of each audience segment.

- **Examine delivery alternatives.**

Although the news media may be the best way to reach some

audience segments, others will need more complex, detailed information than the news media can be expected to provide.

Newsworkers are rarely educators; they are reporters

The news media may be an appropriate delivery alternative when you want to:

- recruit individuals or groups to participate in an educational program focused on a public issue
- tell the public how to get educational materials related to an issue
- alert as many people as possible to an issue in the making
- offer an even-handed overview of an issue or correct a misunderstanding.

The news media are not in the education business. Most reporters and editors believe their primary job is to inform. This means they don’t look at public issues in the same way an educator would. To connect with newsworkers, you need to think like a person whose job is delivering news or opinion to the public. Whether or not information provided to the media actually gets used depends largely on whether an editor or reporter sees it as newsworthy. And deciding whether something is newsworthy is entirely up to editors or reporters.

Defining “news” is tricky, but it usually refers to topics that are timely, have local interest, carry a sense of importance, involve conflict, are unusual, or carry a human interest appeal. Whether an educator’s story is considered newsworthy may depend on other events that day, how much competition there is for news time or space, how much interest there is likely to be in the educator’s story or topic, and how it is presented to the reporter or editor. The likelihood of success can be enhanced by applying a standard rule to a potential story or topic. First, ask, “Who am I trying to reach and why?” Second, ask, “What will their interest or reaction be?” If the reader/viewer/listener is likely to say “So what?” to a story, it isn’t likely to make the news. The best story topics will be those that meet the needs and interests of the audience. Weak stories are often more focused on meeting the needs of the organization providing the story.

Going beyond the news media

For many audiences and many objectives, “limited-audience media,” such as fact sheets, newsletters, lectures, briefings, and workshops, may be more effective delivery alternatives than the news media.⁶⁵ These are especially important in regard to issues not covered by the media and for audience segments that need more detailed information, or information tailored to their interests and concerns.

For purposes of public issues education, “dialogue formats”—in which people on different sides of an issue confront and learn from one another—are especially appropriate. Examples include community forums, study circles, roundtables, and “town meetings.”⁶⁶

Dialogue formats are ideal ways to correct many of the deficiencies in the news media's depiction of public issues.

Through dialogue:

- People are able to learn more completely and accurately how they and others are affected by an issue.
- Connections among related issues are more likely to be identified and discussed.
- Balanced treatment of all sides of an issue is more likely.
- Exploration of necessary tradeoffs is more likely to occur.
- A larger array of alternatives is likely to be identified and addressed
- Consequences for people in different situations and with different values are more likely to be correctly identified.
- Contradictory information is more likely to be noted and addressed.
- Feasible solutions and realistic strategies are more likely to be identified, and obstacles to simplistic solutions are less likely to be ignored.

News organizations as potential partners in public issues education

There are ample reasons for closer and more frequent collaboration between public issues educators and the news media. Each has advantages that could enhance the other's work.

In recent years, the news media have been widely criticized for sensational, polarized or simplistic coverage of public issues. By contrast, public issues education—relying on limited-audience media and dialogue formats as well as the mass media—has the potential to develop richer and more complete understandings of public issues than the news media normally provide. Journalists concerned about criticism of the news media might

well be receptive to educators' ideas for improving public understanding of important issues.

The educator's problem, on the other hand, is that educational programs on public issues inevitably involve only a small portion of the population. The news media reach a much larger audience. Improved relationships between public issues educators and the news media can be a useful way to communicate the richer and more complex understanding of issues that develops among participants in educational programs to larger audiences.

If you can find ways to enhance the news media's reporting of educational programs and their outcomes, the result could be the double advantage of (1) improved reporting of public issues by the media; and (2) a greatly expanded audience for public issues education.

Building partnerships with the media

As an aid in creating links between educators and the media, advice from the Kettering Foundation to conveners of National Issues Forums⁶⁷ applies equally well to public issues educators in general.

- Communicate to newswriters what's different about public issues education—how it differs from policy making as either a polarized debate or the application of expert solutions.
- Explain the goals and methods of public issues education (or have newswriters attend an educational event) and then ask what role they can envision for their medium.
- Suggest possible mutual benefits, such as: "hearing 'real people' talk substantively on a subject" "a different framing for a familiar issue besides 'experts as usual,'" "a great visual opportunity—a mix of citizens interacting together;" "a time-efficient way to synthesize different citizen voices;" or "narratives as well as numbers on public attitude."⁶⁸
- Include representatives of media organizations on your steering committee. Ask a local newspaper or TV station to cosponsor an educational program.
- Get the right contact at each media organization, such as the assignments editor, public service director, public affairs program producer, or a reporter or commentator who is passionate about the topic of a particular educational program.
- Suggest features or personality stories on steering committee members, facilitators, or others active in promoting new ways to address public issues.
- Suggest stories on how your community is dealing with the issues. What are the voices of opposition? Why is there disagreement? What is being done to foster a constructive search for workable solutions?
- Invite a reporter to attend an educational program and write about the type of discussion that takes place. Be sure to explain the objective of promoting mutual understanding across conflicting perspectives.
- Respect the news media's need for drama, but emphasize that "too much emphasis on easily dramatized elements of a story can obscure the public's need to consider all sides of the issue."⁶⁹ The goal—ideally one that is shared between educators and the media—should be to find ways to "use the drama of each issue to underscore the public's need to understand the multifaceted and complex nature of the problems."⁷⁰

Evaluating public issues education

Early in the planning of any public issues education effort, it is important to consider:

- What you hope to accomplish overall.
- The desired outcomes for each meeting or phase.
- How to know along the way whether you are on the right track.
- How you will know when you've "arrived."
- Who else will need or want to know what you've done.
- What you will want to be able to tell people about the project.

These considerations provide a framework for evaluating the process which can help you:

- keep track of progress and make needed adjustments in individual educational programs
- provide occasions and vehicles for reflection and dialogue on the practice of public issues education
- meet the demand for accountability to administrators and funders
- document lessons to help in your own future work or in the work of other educators.

Benefits of evaluation

- ▶ **Mid-course adjustments:** A mid-course evaluation of one project showed that the project's materials were not being disseminated or used by participating organizations as planned. Changes were made to provide more assistance to the organizations' communications or education specialists.
- ▶ **Identifying project impacts:** Evaluators of another project learned that national legislation to provide R&D funding and other measures expected to help the state's economy could be traced back to an offshoot of their earlier project (specifically, to a presentation of research findings that came to the attention of a member of Congress).
- ▶ **Lessons for future work:** Participant interviews revealed that one project's small-group discussions were evaluated more favorably when the groups were given a specific assignment, such as "Come up with three policy recommendations."
- ▶ **Occasions for reflection:** Broadly representative local coalitions were harder to maintain than more narrowly based state-level ones, but members of the local coalitions had higher levels of satisfaction with their accomplishments and were more optimistic about long-run impacts.⁷¹

In addition, evaluation results offer policy makers and the public a richer understanding of what public issues education is and what it can accomplish. Public issues education is a necessary activity in a democratic political system and is therefore a valid purpose for community organizations such as Cooperative Extension. But its practice is often limited by the fact that its potential contributions are poorly understood. To promote such understanding, public issues education needs to be described clearly in statements of purpose such as those adopted by Extension in several states.

But words are not enough. Policy makers and citizens also need to see actions consistent with the words. Evaluation can help communicate the purposes, reality and accomplishments of public issues education to policy makers and citizens.

Evaluating implementation and end results

Evaluation should not be something tacked on at the end of an educational program just to meet accountability requirements. Ultimate impacts are not the only things to evaluate—and may not even be the most important things. The process of stepping back—preferably with help from someone with an independent perspective—to reflect on what you've done and where you're going is useful throughout an educational program. Goals, strategies and implementation, as well as impacts, can all be evaluated.

Sample "program theory"

- ▶ What do you hope to accomplish? Progress toward resolving contentious environmental issues (wetlands, endangered species, etc.).
- ▶ What methods or activities do you plan to use? (1) Leadership institute for emerging leaders from government, industry, environmentalist groups, and natural resource agencies; (2) dispute resolution methods (presented at the institute); (3) year-long practicum for each participant.
- ▶ Expected connections? Participants will gain experience with people on different sides of issues and will learn dispute resolution techniques. They will apply what they learn to issues "back home" during their practicums. Some success in resolving contentious issues will become apparent. Experience and observation of successful work will promote application of similar methods to additional issues.
- ▶ Questions to ask along the way: Do the institute participants represent a mix of perspectives on the issues? Do they actually learn dispute resolution techniques and gain confidence in their ability to communicate across diverse perspectives? Do they work on contentious issues during their practicums? What happens? Do they experience success? Is there evidence that they will use similar approaches on other issues?⁷²

What you need is a "program theory" that you can articulate—not a theory in the abstract, scientific sense, but a statement of what you hope to accomplish, the activities you will carry out, and the effect you expect your activities to have on your goals. Note that this is different from simply stating your objectives and then evaluating to see whether they have been accomplished. Articulating a program theory suggests questions to ask along the way that will help you and others decide whether your theory is sound, whether you're still on track, and whether adjustments need to be made.

Evaluation choices

Whether the focus is on a program's ultimate impacts, or on progress made along the way, educators need some measures of outcomes. A few key choices will help to focus the evaluation:

- For what potential outcomes will you look? Will the focus be on benefits for individual participants (what they have learned) or changes in the policy issues (especially, progress toward resolution)?
- Will the evaluation focus on pre-determined outcomes, or will it be designed to pick up whatever impacts may emerge? (The former may be better for testing and refining theories about good educational practice; the latter may be better at capturing the significance and meaning of program experiences for participants.)

- Will the outcomes to be looked for represent acceptance of existing policy-making processes or a change-oriented critique? If the former is chosen, evaluators might look, for example, only for evidence of a more informed and actively participating citizenry. The change-oriented technique might lead them to look for more equitable participation or for participation that includes determining which issues get on the agenda.

These choices are not simple matters of "right" or "wrong," and they are not mutually exclusive, but they do represent fundamental choices that have implications for evaluation strategies and the choice of questions to ask.

Impacts on individual learners

Evaluations of educational programs typically focus on what happens to individual learners. In the case of public issues education, outcomes that might be looked for include changes in:

- knowledge (about government, the political process, or the issues)
- attitudes or opinions (regarding government and politics in general or the specific issues addressed in an educational program)
- skills (including skills in leadership, policy research, moral deliberation, communication, conflict resolution and political strategy)
- behavior or behavioral dispositions (such as voting or participation in political campaigns or the policy making process).⁷³

Sample benefits to individuals

Evaluation studies of a variety of public issues education programs have documented these effects:

- ▶ 72% of participants in satellite town meetings reported that they had learned something new about the issues.
- ▶ 44% reported increased understanding of how to influence the policy making process.
- ▶ 69% reported that participation affected their perspectives on the issues.
- ▶ 79% of the roundtable participants reported that the discussions revealed some points of view of which they were not aware.⁷⁴

For the most part, measuring impacts on individual learners is no different in public issues education than it is in other educational programs. Two exceptions concern the importance of questions about equality and consensus.⁷⁵

Equality

If public issues education leads to increased participation, is participation becoming more equal? Or are people who have already been influential becoming more involved (and the weak no better off than they were)? If knowledge or skill is increasing as a result of educational programs, is the gap between more and less knowledgeable (or skillful) individuals growing or shrinking?

Consensus:

If public issues education leads to changes in attitudes, are attitudes coming closer together or moving farther apart? An educational program that produces major shifts in the attitudes of individual participants may actually move people farther apart, making issue resolution more difficult, while another program that stimulates only minor changes in attitudes may nonetheless increase the likelihood of finding common ground.

Sample impacts on issue resolution

- ▶ During a governor's rural strategy meeting, references were made to material learned during the project's educational program.
- ▶ Antagonism existed between two school districts before they participated in a public issues education program. After the program, the districts agreed to cooperate in a new program.
- ▶ A county zoning plan included protection of groundwater resources, as recommended by project participants.
- ▶ A state rural development commission was created as a direct result of one project's statewide workshop.⁷⁶

Impacts on issue resolution

Although evaluating impacts at the individual level is important, impacts on issue resolution are at least equally important. To date, such impacts have seldom been evaluated systematically, although anecdotal evidence is not hard to find.

Systematically collecting such evidence is not difficult. Participants in the policy making process (and observers of it) frequently talk about changes in the issues. They may note, for example, that an issue has become more prominent, more (or less) contentious, more (or less) likely to be resolved. Can such changes be attributed to specific educational interventions? Of course they can. The connections can't be proven, but reasonable arguments—persuasive to reasonable people—can certainly be presented.

The most obvious way to detect such changes is to tap the observations of people who (1) are involved in public decision making on issues (or are otherwise in a good position to observe the process); and (2) can be expected to make judgments about the impact of specific educational interventions. Such individuals can provide interesting and informative answers to such questions as:

- What happened as a result of the educational activities?
- What was it about the educational activities that led to these results?
- What would have happened if the educational activities had not taken place?

An alternative approach is to talk about an issue and to trace the influences on its evolution to see what, if any, effect an educational program appears to have had.

Sources of evaluation data

Who can help answer such questions?

Public issues educators

Public issues educators themselves can observe changes in the issues and plausible connections to these changes linked to their educational efforts. You must resist the temptation to see favorable connections that don't really exist, so you might want to ask others for "reality checks." Keeping a journal can be a good idea—take time on a regular basis to describe the issue, note changes and record specific evidence of impacts that can be traced to educational interventions.

Advisory committee members

Advisory committees often help plan and implement public education programs. Members are likely to be knowledgeable about the issues and to approach them from diverse perspectives. Providing assistance in evaluating the program and its impacts is a logical responsibility of such a committee.

Program participants

Participants in educational programs (the learners) are not necessarily knowledgeable observers of the policy making process. But, if a program is one that brings together key players on all sides of an issue, it makes sense to ask the audience itself, at periodic intervals, to describe the issue (so that changes over time can be detected) and to make judgments about the educational program's impact.

Media people

Newspaper, radio, or TV reporters are close and reasonably objective observers of public policy making. If the media cover an issue addressed by an educational program, you may try to interview news reporters (turning the tables!) at appropriate intervals to get their observations of changes in the issue and of plausible impacts of educational interventions.

News accounts

If an issue receives sufficient coverage by the news media, news accounts themselves can be a source of useful evaluation data. How is the issue described or discussed in news stories and how do the descriptions and discussion change over time? Do news stories contain evidence of impact by the educational interventions, or does the timing of changes in news accounts of the issue suggest such impacts?

Policy makers

Policy makers are likely to have a broad view of issues as well as sufficient interest in them to be knowledgeable about how they are discussed and understood by various parties. They, too, can be interviewed at appropriate intervals.

Evaluating progress in resolving issues

One of the biggest frustrations in evaluating impacts on issue resolution stems from the fact that (1) public decision making often takes a very long time; and (2) educational programs are only one influence among multitudes that affect decision making. Fortunately, creative use of process models, such as the ones described in Chapter 2, helps overcome these obstacles. The basic assumption of process models consists of the idea that an educator determines the stage an issue is in, and then designs appropriate educational interventions. A further assumption is that the interventions should help move the issue to the next stage. It should be possible, then, to evaluate public issues education, not according to its impact on an issue's final resolution, but according to its success in moving an issue from one stage to the next. Outcome indicators for each stage can help educators know whether they are making progress toward issue resolution and decide when to shift gears and move on to educational interventions appropriate for the next stage.

For example, if you use the issue evolution model, you could ask the following questions at each stage of the process.

Stage 1-Concern: How is the problem or situation defined? Has the way the problem is defined changed, and, if so, how?

Stage 2-Involvement: Who is involved in the policy making process? Has involvement changed, and, if so, how?

Stage 3-Issue: How is the issue—the various parties' goals and points of disagreement—defined? Have the goals and points of disagreement changed, and, if so, how?

Stage 4-Alternatives: What alternatives are being considered? Has the menu of alternatives under consideration changed, and, if so, how?

Stage 5-Consequences: What potential consequences of the different alternatives are being considered? Have expectations or concerns about consequences changed, and, if so, how?

Stage 6-Choice: What are policy makers considering as they approach a decision? Have influences on the policy makers changed, and, if so, how? What decision was made? How do the various parties feel about the decision?

Stage 7-Implementation: How is the new policy being implemented? Have changes occurred in its implementation, and, if so, what are they?

Stage 8-Evaluation: How well is the new policy working? Is there agreement about that? Has opinion about implementation of the policy changed, and, if so, how?

In each stage, you can also ask, "What would be different if the educational program had not taken place?"

Evaluation challenges

Some of the challenges in evaluating public issues education include:

- the complexity of public issues and by necessity, of educational programs that address them
- the fact that educational programs typically evolve and change during the course of their implementation
- difficulties in identifying and adequately sampling all of the audiences educators hope to affect
- the absence of "tried and true" measurement techniques for most outcomes of interest
- the need to provide support for the validity of inferences drawn from measurement efforts, so they will hold up under reasonable scrutiny.

To cope with these challenges, evaluation experts advise (1) maintaining a skeptical attitude toward one's data; (2) employing multiple philosophical and value frameworks, methods, measures, and analyses; and (3) developing rigorous procedures for monitoring and assuring the quality of data.⁷⁷

Another important concern goes beyond the question of whether the inferences drawn in an evaluation are valid. Evaluators are also challenged to consider whether their work is designed to lead to valid uses or actions. A paper-and-pencil knowledge test that excludes illiterate or less verbal participants might fail to yield valid inferences. But a critique of an existing policy process derived from open-ended interviews of multiple participants but disseminated to only a few might represent invalidity in terms of use or action.

In short, public issues education is enmeshed in the political fray of public policy making with the intent of somehow improving it. This "somehow" will vary from program to program, reflecting the inevitable diversity of situations and viewpoints in a complex democratic society. Evaluating programs and their outcomes calls for a thoughtful, politically conscious, and ethically responsible contribution to the policy making process.

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¹Hahn, Alan J. *Resolving Public Issues and Concerns through Policy Education*. Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1988, p. 1.

²Renfro, William. *Issues Management in Strategic Planning*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1993, p. 27.

³Quoted in Renfro, *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education*, 1916. Reprint: New York, Free Press, 1966.

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⁵Alternatives and Consequences model: For more information see House, V. W. and Young, A. A. *Education for Public Decisions*. Module 6 of *Working With Our Publics*. North Carolina State University, 1988. Learners' Packet, pp. 50-51.

⁶Issue Evolution/Educational Intervention model: See *ibid.*, pp. 48-50. Also, Hahn, Alan J. *Resolving Public Issues and Concerns through Policy Education*. Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1988.

⁷Ladder Model: See Reedy, James R. and L. Tim Wallace. *The Ladder: An Analytical Decision-Making Process*. Univ. of California Cooperative Extension, 1992. Since revised by Reedy, J.R.; Bennett, R.; Connolly, C.; Rilla, E.; and Wagenknecht, J. For information, contact Reedy at Cooperative Extension, 1682 Novato Blvd., Suite 150-B, Novato CA 94947.

⁸Discovery & Analysis Model: See Dale, Duane. *Public Issues Education: A Handbook*. University of Wisconsin-Extension, 1993, p. 13.

⁹SHAPES Model: See House and Young, *op. cit.*, Learners' Packet pp. 54-57.

¹⁰Interest-Based Problem Solving: Fiske, Emmett; Gray, Kelsey, "Interest-Based Problem Solving Process and Techniques." Washington State University Cooperative Extension, Pullman WA, 1992. See also Sachs, Andy; Danielson, Leon; Garber, Si; Levi, Mike; and Mustian, David. *Extension's Role in Environmental Policy Conflict: A Handbook for the February 17, 1993, satellite conference*. North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, North Carolina State University, February 1993.

¹¹National Issues Forums: *Leadership Handbook* and other publications from National Issues Forums (100 Commons Road, Dayton OH 45459-2777, 800-433-7834). NIF also incorporates study circle techniques which are described in materials from the Study Circles Resource Center of Pomfret, Connecticut.

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¹⁴Renfro, William. *Issues Management in Strategic Planning*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1993.

¹⁵From Dale, D. *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁶Hahn, Alan J.; Jennifer Greene. and Carla Waterman, C. "Educating About Public Issues: Lessons from Eleven Innovative Public Policy Education Projects." Ithaca, NY: Cornell Cooperative Extension, 1994.

¹⁷Gamson, William A. *Talking Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

¹⁸Adapted from Dale, *op. cit.*, pg. 19. The Texas case is presented in the Public Issues Education satellite videoconference of October 26, 1993, and summarized at the beginning of the January 25, 1994 videoconference. Copies can be obtained from University of Wisconsin Extension - Publications, 608-262-3346.

¹⁹From Dale, *op. cit.*

²⁰Adapted from Habana-Hafner, Sally, and Reed, Horace B. *Partnerships for Community Development: Resources for Practitioners and Trainers*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, Center for Organization and Community Development. 1989, p. 34.

²¹Ogden, D. M. "How national policy is made." In *Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies*. Oak Brook, Ill.: Farm Foundation, 1971. See also Infanger, Craig and Wolfe, Mary Ellen. In *Working With Our Publics VI: Education for Public Decisions*. North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, North Carolina State University, 1988. *Sourcebook*, pp. 21-23.

²²Flinchbaugh, Barry L. "How to Handle Public Issues in an Educational Framework." Address delivered to the Annual Meeting of the Association of Administrators of Home Economics, Dallas Texas, 1974. See also Infanger and Wolfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20.

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²⁴House, Verne W. and Ardis Armstrong Young, *Working with Our Publics, Module 6: Education for Public Decisions* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service and Dept. of Adult and Community College Education, North Carolina State University), 1988. Learner's Packet, pp. 64-67.

²⁵Mustian R. David; Liles, Richard T.; and Pettitt, John M. *Working with Our Publics, Module 2: The Extension Education Process* (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service and Dept. of Adult and Community College Education, North Carolina State University), 1988. Learners' Packet, pp. 27-28.

²⁶Mustian *et al.*, *op.cit.*, Sourcebook p. 33.

²⁷The national Cooperative Extension System endorsed a policy statement on public issues education in October 1992. At the state level, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension System have prepared policy statements on public issues education or public policy education which may serve as useful models for other states.

Chapter 4

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- ²⁹ Ho, Robert P. "Partners in Rural Health: The State Rural Development Council" Paper presented at the Northeast Regional Rural Health Conference, "Building Rural Health Partnerships," Burlington VT.
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- ³⁴ Habana-Hafner and Reed, *op. cit.*
- ³⁵ Hahn, Alan J. "Educational Coalitions, Political Coalitions, and Roles for Extension." Steve A. Halbrook and Teddee E. Grace, eds., *Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies-1993*. Oak Brook IL: Farm Foundation, 1994, pp. 125-127.
- ³⁶ These generalizations are supported by Hahn, Greene, and Waterman, *op. cit.*
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- ³⁹ Scherer, Clifford W. "Communicating Water Quality Risk." *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, 45, March-April, 1990, pp. 198-200.
- ⁴⁰ Von Schomberg, *op. cit.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
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- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Dale, Duane. *Public Issues Education: Tools, Techniques, and Tips for Extension Educators: Videoconference Site Coordinator's Guide*. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin-Extension, 1993.
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public issues ***education***

Published on behalf of the National Public Policy Education Committee, Public Issues Education Materials Task Force by the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension.

This material is based upon work supported by the Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Farm Foundation, under special project number 94-EXCA-2-0330.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension. University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. If you need this information in an alternative format, contact the UWEX Affirmative Action Office.

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G3629 Public Issues Education:
Increasing Competence in Resolving
Public Issues I-II-94-5M-350-E