

# Engaging the Public and Holding Great Events

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# Outreach

- The best invitation is a personal invitation from someone you know
- Broad outreach
- Cascading networks
- Boots on the ground/Jitters Tour
- There are no shortcuts in building relationships

# Top Ten Tips for Hosting

- #1 Always greet people when they arrive.
- #2 Take time for meaningful introductions.
- #3 Point out bathrooms and all logistics that help make folks comfortable.
- #4 Always review group agreements.
- #5 Let participants know they are part of something bigger; be clear about how their voices will make a difference.
- #6 Support your facilitators—it is hard work to remain attentive and fair minded. A moderator should be available to check in with small groups.

- #7 Always prepare for differences that make a difference (political, racial, social class, education, etc.). All voices are equal.
- #8 Be prepared for direct questions and assume transparency is the best approach when answering questions about your project.
- #9 Ask participants to complete an evaluation, and always debrief with facilitators and the planning group.
- #10 Have fun and maintain a sense of humor!

WHAT DO WE WANT?!

RESPECTFUL DISCOURSE.

WHEN DO WE WANT IT?!

NOW WOULD BE  
AGREEABLE TO ME,  
BUT I AM INTERESTED  
IN YOUR OPINION.

- Respond to a perceived issue/concern (more than one segment on campus shares the perception)
- Create a planning group representing all segments
- Choose the right model of engagement
- Frame the issue and questions to be answered
- Assure buy-in from decision-makers

# Organizing continued

- Identify relevant data and organize the data in accessible format
- Write the discussion guide—process and data
- Outreach and recruitment of participants
- Logistics
- Recruit and prepare facilitators
- Talk (and listen!)
- Summary report
- Talk to action follow-up



# Lessons Learned...

- We needed a **communications plan** from the beginning and instead started building one in the middle of our process. It still helped with audience profiling, messaging, and strategic outreach. All projects need a communications lead.
- Our Social Scientist ≠ Communication Scientist ≠ Website Designer ≠ Graphic Artist ≠ Evaluator ≠ Community Organizer... Understanding our own **roles and expertise** better from the beginning would have helped us **match our process to the methods, messages and modes**.
- Communications Plan and Engagement are closely linked and need to be coordinated - but they are **not the same thing**.

# And more lessons...

Consider which groups you are you trying to reach, and why?

- Do they make decisions?
- Influence decisions?
- Are they vulnerable to the impacts of decisions?

Recognize that different forms of engagement will resonate with different groups...

- Public community conversations
  - Deliberative democracy approach
- Targeted outreach to vulnerable groups
  - Social justice approach
- Outreach to staff/practitioners in different sectors
  - Institutional change approach

