

Relevant reading

- Citizens at the Center: a New Approach to Civic Engagement. Cynthia M. Gibson, Ph.D. The Case Foundation. http://www.casefoundation.org/web/guest/spotlight/civic_engagement/summary
- Framing Issues for Public Deliberation: A curriculum guide for workshops. National Issues Forum Institute. <http://www.nifi.org/>
- We Think. Charlie Leadbeater. <http://www.wethinkthebook.net/book/download-and-print.aspx>
- Touching the State. Design Council, RED Unit and IPPR. 2004. <http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=311>
- [How to Design A Successful eParticipation Strategy](#) International Centre for Excellence in Local E-Democracy. 2007.
- *The wisdom of crowds : why the many are smarter than the few and how collective wisdom shapes business, economies, societies, and nations.* James Surowiecki. New York: Doubleday. 2004.
- Apple User Experience Guidelines http://developer.apple.com/documentation/UserExperience/Conceptual/OSXHIGuidelines/index.html#/apple_ref/doc/uid/20000957
- *The Design of Everyday Things.* Donald Norman. New York: Basic Books. 2002. c1988.
- *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative.* Edward Tufte. Cheshire, Conn.: Graphics Press. c1997.

4.2 Project Management

Project management is where design hits reality.

Snapshot

Voices

"The technology is lovely but where is public participation valued? If we don't have buy-in from civil servants and MPs we won't get far." -- Workshop participant

Quote

"The time and effort that citizens are willing to invest in being informed or consulted is itself a resource for public policy-making. Governments must therefore make every effort to lower the thresholds for citizens' access to information and participation, employ best practices and account for the use they make of citizens' inputs."

Key messages

- Choose your tools for online participation on the basis of your objectives and your target group's needs, not the other way round.
- Online participation adds another layer of complexity to an already complex endeavour. Think through the risks beforehand and make contingency plans. You'll be accountable for resources, process and results.
- Communications, reporting and evaluation should be built into project management from the start, not left as an afterthought.

Highlights

- **Managing online participation:** Online participation can supplement and support your regular policy making or service design process. It can be used as the sole channel for participation or as a primer in the run-up to a face-to-face interaction and as a way of keeping the conversation going afterwards.
- **Skills:** Online participation raises a host of new challenges and requires a mix of skills both new and old. Make sure you have a bit of both when you build your dream team.
- **Choosing and using an online platform:** As ever, technical issues are only half the story. The main focus should be on the users.
- **Online facilitation and moderation:** High quality facilitation can encourage people to participate online while competent moderation ensures that the online platform works well and participants comply with its terms and conditions.
- **Managing timelines:** Manage expectations by being clear about project and decision-making timelines. Draw up a detailed project plan with clear milestones. Above all, recognise that you will need time to build trust.
- **Securing resources:** Think beyond the immediate challenge of securing a budget. Seek creative ways of using the knowledge and skills of other public agencies, private sector and civil society organisations who share your objectives.
- **Managing risk:** Senior managers and ministers will need to be reassured that the risks associated with online participation have been examined, limited and mitigated wherever possible. Just as for any traditional participation exercise, you will need to draw on the advice of your legal, finance, communications and IT risk management experts.
- **Responding to project setbacks:** Despite your best efforts to mitigate risks, you may still have to fight some fires. Responding appropriately to participants bent on venting their frustration, hijacking the conversation, or being aggressive requires you to re-focus attention on the original purpose and the need to ensure that everyone's voices can be heard.

- Reporting: A short executive summary should be provided to participants, stakeholders and decision makers together with the full report.
- Communications: A positive perception of your process will build confidence among senior management, ministers and the general public that online engagement is a worthwhile approach to policy development and service improvement. Make sure you communicate effectively and regularly throughout the process.

Full story

Managing online participation

Online participation is in its infancy. The good news is that this will allow you to be creative and explore additional avenues for engaging people in policy making or service design. The bad news is that there are no hard and fast rules. You will need to use your own management experience to mix and match tools to needs, and skills to tasks.

Your choice of online tools should supplement and support your regular policy making or service design process. Online tools are particularly useful for enhancing your process in the following ways.

- Presenting information in engaging or compelling ways that encourage people to respond.
- Marketing your process to encourage wider involvement.
- 'Always-on' interactivity -- people can contribute whenever they choose.
- Radically flexible methods for gathering input -- everything from weblogs, to discussion forums, to SMS, to video, to long or short questionnaires.
- Visualising change through graphic displays like animated graphs, pictures, geographical information systems or video games.
- Co-ordinating large numbers in pursuing a common conversation or activity.
- Automated data-capture of people's preferences, ideas and behaviour.

More specifically, online tools can be used as a primer in the run-up to a face-to-face interaction, or as a way of keeping the conversation going afterwards. The following examples illustrate how online tools can be integrated into the design of some common consultation and engagement approaches.

- Public meetings -- a weblog with postings about the issues might be a good way to prime people for a public meeting, and allow them to comment in advance.
- Roadshows or exhibitions -- allow people to leave video messages or short films for one another related to the issues raised by the exhibition or roadshow.
- Local workshops -- an online workbook which people fill out before they arrive can inform and help share people's views, to generate conversation at the workshop. A similar workbook could be filled out at the end of the workshop to see if people's views have changed.
- Citizens' panels -- wiki, geographic information system 'mashups', as well as discussion forums and email lists can be combined to encourage people to share information about their community, and generate recommendations about proposed changes.

Skills


Online participation raises a host of new challenges and requires a mix of skills, both new and old. There is no point in letting your IT department, or any other department, run the show in splendid isolation. Nor is it a good idea to exclude them from the earliest discussions and expect them to work miracles later on.


The team that's ready to execute a strategy for online participation will need several skill sets, including:


- research and policy analysis
- marketing and public relations
- communications (preferably in multimedia formats, but definitely excellent writing skills)
- community development
- teaching and facilitation
- user-centred systems design
- information management/information design
- evaluation.


Team personas

To help guide your thinking about the skills involved in online engagement, the following are descriptions of a possible 'dream team' for online participation.

	<p>Wayne has spent years as a policy analyst. He's known for his readable prose, sharp mind and excellent presentation skills. He is an inspired teacher who is terrific at helping people come to grips with complex issues and ideas. He is knowledgeable about various deliberative facilitation techniques to help people wrestle with complexity.</p>

	<p>Yin is a great network builder and knows how to rally people around a goal. Her experience doing communication and marketing work in community organisations has taught her about listening to people and finding creative ways to amplify their voices.</p>

	<p>Mereama is a technology and design maven. And, for a techy type, she has a really good policy mind. She spends her weekends creating videos, blogging and working on fun codes and scripts to improve people's understanding of information around big issues like climate change.</p>

	<p>Cal comes from a background of managing large-scale surveys and public opinion research projects. His outstanding background in quantitative and qualitative research methods adds scientific rigour to working with the results of the online engagement process. He also has a flair for the visual and knows the value of marketing and communicating ideas.</p>

Images from *Scrutable*, 2001. Copyright Matt Lewis

Choosing and using an online platform

From a project management perspective, online tools add another layer of complexity to an already complex endeavour. They require resources, and you will be accountable for successfully engaging online as well as delivering on your other project objectives.

Technical issues

The availability and quality of proprietary, open source solutions or freeware platforms for online participation is growing. You don't always need to have a system purpose-built at great cost, or even to license software. However, it's highly desirable to have in-house expertise, or at least ready access to agents who are familiar with the source code. This is because you usually need to tailor the application for the specific use required. Any platform you choose must allow you to securely host your online questionnaire, workbook, wiki, blog or discussion forum, preferably in the **govt.nz** namespace.

- **Choose a platform.** Some things to look for in a platform are that it:
 - rates highly for its usability and accessibility for people (i.e. it is compliant with Government Web Standards)
 - generates evidence that the platform is active and presents that information to encourage users to participate
 - collects, organises and stores data effectively and securely
 - can support the media you want to use in your process
 - is cost effective.
- **Invest in multimedia.** If you choose to use video or audio as part of your process, be aware that producing them requires extra logistical attention. You need proper

microphone set-ups, camera positioning and editing capacity to turn out quality audio/visual material.

- **Make data visually appealing.** Online participation tends to turn out large amounts of data. If you've chosen well, your platform should help crunch a lot of the structured data gathered through your process. You may wish to use more sophisticated data management and statistical analysis software (e.g. MS Access or SAS) or open source alternatives (e.g. MySQL or R). Other free tools for producing visualisations that can help people understand and use your data now exist (e.g. IBM's manyeyes and Swivel). As you are collating data, consider using some of the data format and style guidelines that these sites require so you can easily generate the visualisation you want. You may draw some inspiration for your visualisations from a range of sites (e.g. <http://www.visualcomplexity.com>). Note that these sites require you to publicly share any data set you upload. If you have any concerns about making public any private or sensitive information, do not use these tools.
- **Back up data.** Remember, technology has a nasty habit of failing. Back up any data you gather.

Supporting users

As ever, technical specifications are only half the story. The main focus should be on the users whose expectations, capacities and reservations will vary. You need to keep the following in mind.

- **Online audiences demand immediacy.** Because there is a risk of failure with any host or platform technology, institutional providers must have a rigorous contingency plan.
- **First time users should agree to a contract when they sign on initially.** The contract should cover privacy, appropriateness of content, and behaviour and obligation of the service provider in terms of continuity of service.
- **People have higher comfort levels with certain type of tools than others** (e.g. email lists versus wikis). They may not feel comfortable with newer tools, especially those involving multimedia. This means either choosing a simpler method of online engagement or investing in some training. A good example of how to do this training can be found at Learning 2.0's 23 things, which is a free resource used to train public librarians about Web 2.0 technology.

Online facilitation and moderation

Facilitation

Online facilitation is a critical component of any online group or environment. The International Association of Facilitators (IAF) defines the following six facilitator competencies.

1. Create collaborative client relationships.
2. Plan appropriate group processes.
3. Create and sustain a participatory environment.
4. Guide group to appropriate and useful outcomes.

5. Build and maintain professional knowledge.
6. Model a positive professional attitude.

The role of the facilitator online is to guide the group process, help a group generate its purpose and culture (or ground rules), address conflict and make interventions to keep the group working towards its purpose.

Typical tasks include:

- sending out email summaries of discussion
- organising online events to attract participation
- encouraging contributions from specific users
- connecting separate but related discussions
- being the main point of contact for the community concerning the process and/or difficulties with the technology.

You may choose to have subject matter experts play the role of facilitator, or use a more 'neutral' facilitator who is adept at engaging experts and lay people in conversation with one another. Either way, your facilitator should adhere to the IAF's Statement of Values and Code of Ethics for Group Facilitators (<http://www.iaf-world.org/i4a/pages/Index.cfm?pageid=3346>).

Moderation

The moderator is the one who ensures that online group content is functioning. This may include monitoring discussion boards to ensure all postings meet guidelines and standards of behaviour, and organising discussion material. Moderators are sometimes responsible for a few of the technical tasks required in assisting the group to participate, such as adding new members and fixing email addresses that 'bounce'.

Moderation of a site will be based on its terms and conditions. Typically, you will be presented with a choice about how to moderate comments. Either you can:

1. moderate all comments before they are posted, or
2. allow comments to appear and moderate after the fact in collaboration with the community.

Most experiences with online participation have shown that moderating comments before they appear on the site is very labour intensive. Most favour allowing comments to appear immediately, relying on the facilitator and the community to find and flag any inappropriate content. As well as being more efficient, this approach has the benefit of demonstrating your trust in the community, and allowing people to be satisfied at seeing their contribution appear immediately.

However, if some discussions become heated, it may be worth closely moderating those particular sections. Be sure to tell the community the reasons for any change in moderation policy or practice. Where the community's standards of conduct are seriously breached, the moderator should have complete discretion to warn or remove offenders from posting public forum content (while preserving read-only access). Most networks now allow for user and usage tracking. Such records will allow for mitigation or suspension of user privileges. We don't expect such tracking to be normally active but can be activated at short notice should the need arise.

Benefits and drawbacks of technology for facilitation

Table 3.2.1 Asynchronous technology

Technology	Examples	Benefits	Drawbacks
Email	webmail, MS Outlook, Eudora, Groupwise	Easy to learn and use, file attachment, broadcast to many, platform independent, written record of conversations.	Slow response, easily misinterpreted, poor context, no visual or audio cues, lack of acknowledgement or feedback, long emails difficult to respond to.
E-groups (list serv)	yahoogroups	One email address, quick and easy to set up, choice of communication style (i.e. emails, daily digest, web only, etc), builds group knowledge over time, provides time for making thoughtful, in-depth responses, efficient knowledge sharing.	Tends to have few very active members and many silent listeners, large volume hard to manage, public misunderstandings, out-of-office replies can cause disruption, advertising embedded in e-group systems.
Discussion forum	PhpBB	Threaded discussion, convenient, searchable, good for information dissemination and archive, file attachment, easier to manage multiple conversations.	Public misunderstandings, interfaces can be confusing, lack of visual and audio cues, poor context. Hard to follow multiple discussions.
Blogs	blogger.com, wordpress, bloglines, moveable type, drupal, multiply, w.blogger, buzznet, flickr	Good for information dissemination and archive, thoughtful and in-depth postings, searchable, blog tagging assists finding conversations, builds narrative over time; tagging and linking of blogs helps people keep track of current conversations on topics of interest.	Discussion more controlled by owner, can be less relevant or less factual.
Wiki	MediaWiki, PBwiki	Great for allowing all users to contribute to drafting documents or building collective resources. Allows users to just browse, post their own material and links, make edits to pages and add tags.	Can be difficult to navigate and hard to follow thread of discussions on the 'discussion' pages.

Source: adapted from table by Stephen Thorpe in *The Art of Facilitation* by Dale Hunter, with contributions from Stephen Thorpe, Hamish Brown and Anne Bailey, NZ: Random House, 2007.

Table 3.2.2 Synchronous technology

Technology	Examples	Benefits	Drawbacks
Internet relay chat	ICQ, MSN messenger, Yahoo messenger, PalTalk, AIM, AOL	Efficient and immediate response, easy to see who is online, good for side conversations (back channel) and informal conversation, useful for ad hoc informal conversations, often include additional tools (whiteboard, games, avatars).	Available times may inconvenience one or more group members, poor context, lack of visual cues, can have one participant dominate the conversation, interface can be confusing, irrelevant information, multiple conversations occurring simultaneously.
Audio conferencing	Skype, freeconference, hotconference	Real-time interaction, richer context with voice cues, greater sense of connection than text, familiarity with telephone interaction, immediate response, can include special features (file sharing, profiles and built-in IRC).	Cost, voice lag or echoes, best with broadband connection for everyone, unequal participation, low stability (as yet), participants need plenty of advance notice, meeting times constrained by participant time zones.
Video conferencing	Skype, Yahoo messenger, MSN messenger	Real-time interaction, richer context with voice and non-verbal cues, greater sense of connection, gives some contextual setting.	Video can lag behind voice or voice echoes, unfamiliarity, requiring adjustment, difficult to read visual cues, requires high-speed broadband connection for everyone, special facilities, low stability (as yet).
Web collaboration	WebIQ, WebEx, Facilitate 4.0, hotoffice	Same time and place can be combined with different time and place, can make meetings more structured, can have anonymous feedback and voting, increased creativity, more participation in decisions, outputs in electronic formats (txt, MS Word, MS Excel, audio, etc.).	Unfamiliarity of interfaces, can force decision-making down one path, can limit creativity, linear data entry modes (choosing, polling, preference scales) tendency to group think, needs clear facilitation, often requires teaching about the tool and facilitation of the meeting at same time, requires preparation (pre-planning).

Source: adapted from table by Stephen Thorpe in *The Art of Facilitation* by Dale Hunter, with contributions from Stephen Thorpe, Hamish Brown and Anne Bailey, NZ: Random House, 2007.

Managing timelines

You need to include the following key milestones in your project plan for an online participation process.

- Materials development -- this is a research and analysis stage and demands a lot of thinking, writing, revising and discussing.
- Technical design -- if this is a process you do not understand well, miscommunication and mismatched expectations between you and your technical staff may lead to slipped timelines.
- Internal and external stakeholder recruitment and engagement -- unless you are using a research firm to recruit your participants, building a base of interested people can take time.
- Community formation and discussion -- trust takes time to build and people may not take up the technology quickly.
- Decision-making -- people are unlikely to understand government processes well. They'll want to see their input acted upon quickly. Of course, this may not happen, since it can take a long time for recommendations to make it to the top of the Minister's 'to-do' list. Clear communications on decision-making processes and deadlines within government are needed to inform people's legitimate expectations of timely feedback.
- Reporting, feedback and evaluation -- ensure timely reporting and feedback to all participants on decisions and next steps. Publish and disseminate evaluation results.

A draft project plan

A draft project plan will have the following main steps.

1. Need for engagement is identified and objectives are defined.
2. Community outreach begins.
3. Process is designed in collaboration with Ministers, senior management, stakeholders and participants.
4. Process is signed off by Ministers, senior management, stakeholders, appropriate risk experts (e.g. legal, records management, corporate communications, political advisors).
5. Framing and facilitation materials are developed and complementary online tools are chosen.
6. Technical platform is developed.
7. Marketing materials are developed.
8. Evaluation plan is drawn up.
9. News media receives notice of the process.
10. Website is launched.
11. Recruitment begins.
12. Face-to-face meetings take place.
13. Summaries are written up and fed back to participants via email and the website.
14. Simultaneously, launch a series of website 'draws' -- e.g. blog posts or videos about learnings to date, perspectives from experts and an online workbook -- to encourage users to contribute online
15. Project update reports are sent to senior management.
16. Summary of findings/collation of data begins.
17. Draft evaluation report is prepared.
18. Summary and recommendations are presented to online and offline community for comment.

19. Final summary and recommendations are presented to senior management and Ministers.
20. Minister/senior management decision.
21. Decision is transmitted to the community.
22. Feedback on the decision and process from the community is passed back to Ministers.
23. Evaluation report on process and outcomes is delivered.
24. Community is encouraged to engage on implementation issues resulting from the Ministerial decision.

Securing resources

The resources you will need to fund online participation will vary depending on the purpose and scale of your engagement process. Securing resources may not only be a matter of obtaining or spending dollars. If you seek out creative ways to align the interests of your project with those of other public agencies, community organisations or businesses, you may be able to gain access to knowledge and skills -- through an exchange of 'in kind' contributions rather than 'hard' capital. You need to recognise you are in an exchange, however. Be prepared to field similar requests from those agencies, community organisations or businesses in the future.

You need to consider the following line items when assessing your resource needs.

Hard costs

These include:

- advertising
- travel for community outreach
- travel to attend face-to-face sessions
- recruitment fees (if you use a research company or community organisations to find participants)
- technical and web-design assistance (if external)
- communications and public relations assistance (if external)
- facilitator fees for face-to-face sessions (if external)
- catering for face-to-face sessions
- meeting space booking for face-to-face sessions
- reimbursement for participant expenses incurred (e.g. travel, childcare, etc)
- professional writer's fees (if external).

Personnel requirements

These include:

- issue research
- materials development (e.g. workbook, interactive discussion document)
- technical development
- community outreach
- face-to-face meeting attendance
- request for proposal (RFP) preparation (if tendering services)
- project reporting

- online facilitation and monitoring
- discussion summaries and final reporting
- technical help desk and training services for participants
- logistical co-ordination (meeting room, catering, travel arrangements, etc.)
- dissemination of project findings -- conference papers, awards, panel discussions.

An example of a budget template

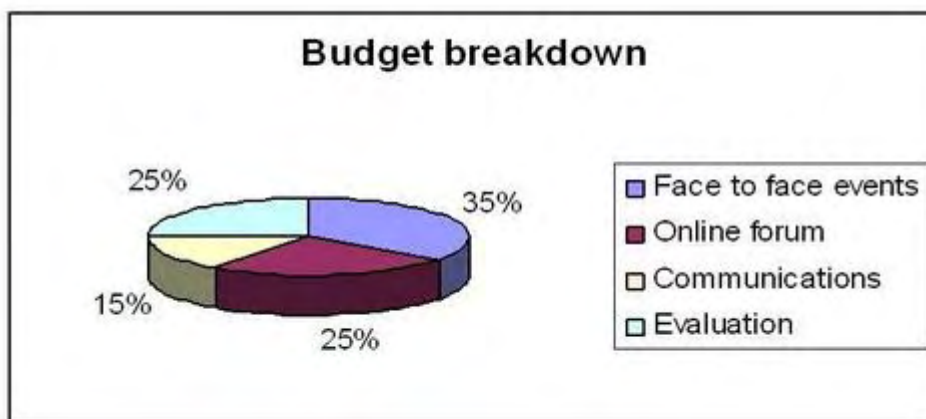
What does engagement cost? This example of an itemised budget template reflects a two-stage public engagement exercise involving both online and face-to-face channels for deliberation. The total cost of this two-stage exercise is estimated to be approximately NZ\$300,000 (as at time of publication in 2007).

It includes the costs associated with a steering group, facilitator training, framing and deliberative events, evaluation, communications and publications. It does not include the costs for tasks undertaken by the agency staff (i.e. project planning and management, acting as scribes at engagement events, final analysis and report writing).

1. Framing exercises: five one-day meetings (four in major centres, one in a rural area), each with a facilitator, a scribe and 10 participants to create the framework for public deliberation.

2. Deliberation: up to 20 half-day face-to-face events all around the country, each with a facilitator and scribe plus an online deliberation including an issue workbook, a tool for sharing stories and ideas, 'tables' for small group and moderated deliberation.

Diagram 4: Budget breakdown



Description of budget breakdown:

- face to face events 35%
- online forums 25%
- communications 15%
- evaluation 25%

Managing risk

It is legitimate for senior managers and Ministers to have concerns about organising anything where public participation is encouraged. This is even more the case when an initiative involves online approaches that rely on innovative applications -- or old applications that sometimes fail.

Responding to such concerns is similar in both the offline and online worlds. Legal, finance, IT risk management experts and communications managers will probably need to review or vet online participation projects. Without their agreement, it is unlikely a participatory process should proceed.

Sources of commonly perceived risks and potential mitigations specific to online participation include the following.

- **Objectionable material posted to the website.** The best way to mitigate this risk is with clear website terms and conditions that promise to remove posts that threaten public officials, Ministers or participants, use foul language or are basically spam.
- **Mid or junior level public servants interacting with the public in public forums.** The Code of Conduct for the State Services provides the bedrock for any public servant. You might also consider establishing 'rules of engagement' for the team that will oversee discussion, and other public servants who may wish to contribute. For instance, the Ministry of Transport stipulates that public servants interacting in its Safe As! Road safety online forum should see themselves as information sources for discussion. They should not directly challenge opinions, unless an opinion that is not borne out by fact is becoming 'received wisdom' within the community. Another possibility is to consider employing a dedicated lead moderator from an external agency, rather than from within the project team. To protect and project a sense of neutrality, the moderator is positioned to welcome and encourage contributions from all participants. The moderator must be clearly promoted to the user audience as an independent party to the discussion. Otherwise some users will perceive institutional bias from the outset. Refer also to State Services Commission guidance on political neutrality for front line staff.
- **Predetermining the outcome in a premature way.** In their haste to encourage contributions from participants, public servants may inadvertently bias the discussion in favour of the first position aired, or seek to reach conclusions too early. Make sure the full time available for the online participation initiative has elapsed before drawing any discussions to a close.
- **Exposure to criticism.** Realistically, criticism is bound to be part of an online engagement process. Expect that in the early stages of opening up discussion, people will be inclined to focus on grievances -- and they may use pointed language to express those grievances. Consider this valuable data for understanding people's experience. But also expect that over time, once most grievances have been aired, discussion will tend to become more constructive. Moreover, continually negative contributors are likely to be marginalised and ignored by the rest of the participant community.
- **The discussion will become a free-for-all.** Specific questions and high-quality, accessible information will frame and scope discussion, and promote thoughtful feedback from participants. Use external and/or internal expertise to help develop these questions and materials. If possible, also draw in advice from mentors who have overseen successful online participation projects.

Responding to project setbacks

All projects, despite careful risk management beforehand, sometimes experience setbacks. Below are some setbacks you may experience and suggestions for how to cope with them. Remember that the best online communities are likely to enjoy a degree of self-moderation. Hasty counter measures and over-reaction by the moderator may be counterproductive and undermine accumulated trust. Take a deep breath and count to 10. (See the SafeAs! RoadSafety Stakeholder Engagement Case Study at http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/SafeAs%21_RoadSafety_Stakeholder_Engagement_Case_Study for an example from experience).

- **Someone says on your message board that they have done something illegal.** Discourage people from making public admissions of illegal activity. However, if you are seeking improvements in areas where, in practical terms, rules are regularly bent (such as certain areas of regulation), then you will need to be given discretion to allow people to speak out without fear of prosecution.
- **It appears an interest group is trying to 'hijack' your process.** In response, you can:
 - speak privately with individuals from that group to find out the reasons for their strategy
 - register their ideas for improvements to the process and share them with the wider community
 - focus them on the goals of the process and the need for a wide variety of people to be involved if the results are to be acted upon.
- **Dialogue is a non-starter.** Occasionally, people will have entrenched positions about issues. You can:
 - faithfully record their concerns, and encourage them to listen to other points of view as others have listened to theirs
 - check whether you've phrased your question in an either/or sort of manner. Rephrase it to allow people to explore nuance and trade-offs
 - if a person is strident, ask them to take the other side of a debate for a moment
- **Anger and outrage.** Some communities may take the opportunity to express their anger at the government's behaviour or at the behaviour of other members of the community. The best response to anger is to acknowledge its cause, and focus participants on the purposes of your process.
- **Aggressive participant behaviour.** If people are aggressive, tell them their behaviour gets in the way of others participating. If they persist, warn them their behaviour will not be tolerated. If they still persist, throw them out. Another option is to apply a technique known as 'disemvowelling' which keeps the offending post in place, but simply removes the vowels as shown in the following example.

Original post	Revised post
<p>When someone starts getting too bouncy or too personal, leave their content in there but remove all the vowels from it. Makes it much harder to read without removing their post altogether (which will make some people even more aggressive). This would just defuse them a wee bit -- they wouldn't expect that. It also sends a good message to the community about what sort of behaviour</p>	<p>This post is inappropriate and has been defused by the administrator: Whn smn strtg gttng t bncy r t prsnl, lv thr cntnt n thr bt rmv ll th vwls frm t. Mks t mch hrdr t rd wtht rmvng thr pst lgtthr (whch wll mk sm ppl vn mr ggrssv). Ths wld jst dfs thm w bt - thy wldn't xpct tht. T ls snds gd mssg t th cmmnty bt wht srt f bhvr s cnsdrd stppng vr th ln, nd wht sn't.</p>

is considered stepping over the line, and what isn't.	
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Reporting

An executive summary should be accompanied by a full report of how the online participation exercise went and what was learnt in the process. As a minimum, project reports should:

- demonstrate who has been involved in your process through demographic information
- contain a high fidelity, readable summary of the discussion, using -- as much as possible -- participants' own words, and bearing their seal of approval
- include recommended actions and any other issues raised by the conversation
- describe any breaches of security or site terms and conditions
- explain any emergent benefits/risks not anticipated by the project plan
- be provided to participants and stakeholders as well as decision-makers.

Online participation initiatives must also address the implications for digital content, copyright, official information requests, government-held information and records management. In addition to the final report, the content generated by online participation must be:

- **archived** properly (ensuring that the public record is preserved)
- **tagged** or made searchable (ensuring others can know about it and find it easily)
- **shared** on a common platform (to avoid duplication of efforts by agencies and consultation fatigue).

Communications

Communicating proactively about your process and its results is critical. The success of your project will be judged not only on whether it met its objectives, but on whether it is *seen* to have met its objectives. A positive perception of your process will build confidence among senior management, Ministers and the general public that online engagement is a worthwhile approach to policy development and service improvement. Consider the following.

- **Most people like good news stories, not only managers and Ministers.** Try and find time to celebrate and share good news. It's especially good finding something that will give positive exposure to an agency or Ministers. Find ways of creating a role for Ministers with such things as an award acceptance speech, cutting a ribbon or a conference speech. Internal celebrations are good too and are a way of recognising the effort some individuals have put in. They may also reinforce working together as a team.
- **Make sure the good news is regular and be proactive.** Send emails with positive feedback or statistics to senior managers -- don't wait to be asked. Feature stories in agency newsletters. Hearing directly from the participants/recipients/beneficiaries of a process carries a lot of weight.
- **Enter awards and write conference papers.** This may be more relevant for ongoing initiatives. But it can be well worth the effort in terms of winning visibility for your agency's efforts -- nationally and internationally.
- **Share results with other agencies.** Encourage them to use your findings for their own needs.

Links

- Political Neutrality: Fact Sheet 5 - For staff who interact with the public (front line staff)
http://www.ssc.govt.nz/upload/downloadable_files/Political-Neutrality-Fact-Sheet-5-front-line-staff.PDF

Case studies

For concrete examples of the management issues discussed here see the set of case studies in the Resources section and in particular:

- Families Commission: The Couch Case Study
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Families_Commission:_The_Couch_Case_Study
- State Services Commission: Online Participation Project Case Study
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/State_Services_Commission:_Online_Participation_Project_Case_Study
- Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council Case Study
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Toi_te_Taiao:_the_Bioethics_Council_Case_Study
- SafeAs! Roadsafety Stakeholder Engagement Case Study
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/SafeAs%21_Roadsafety_Stakeholder_Engagement_Case_Study

Relevant reading

- *The Art of Facilitation* Dale Hunter, with contributions from Stephen Thorpe, Hamish Brown and Anne Bailey. New Zealand: Random House. 2007.
- *Matching Methods with Policy Purpose: Two Case Examples of Public Engagement.* Mary Pat MacKinnon, Sonia Pitre and Judy Watling. CPRN Research Report P|11. March 2007. 60 pp. <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1631&l=en>
- *Working Together: Involving Community and Stakeholders in Decision-Making. Government of Western Australia.* 2006.
<http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au/documents/FullColourlowresolution.pdf>
- *Electronic Engagement: A Guide for Public Sector Managers.* Dr Peter Chen. The Australia National University, ANU E Press. 2007.
http://epress.anu.edu.au/engage_citation.html

4.3 Evaluating to learn, learning to evaluate

This section provides guidance for evaluating online participation.