Involving the community in your project or organisation is normally seen as quite an important aspect particularly if the organisation relies on the communities support to succeed. There are several ways of involving the community:

## Community appraisals

Community appraisals are a technique which allows local people to undertake a detailed survey to take stock of community life.  The heart of the appraisal is a self-completion questionnaire which is normally delivered to every household in the community, or a sample of the population.  However, an appraisal is not simply a questionnaire survey, but should be seen as a broader process which often involves other methods, such as forums and workshops.

## Small group discussions

Small group discussions cover a range of similar approaches, all of which are based on people working together in small groups.  This type of approach emphasises interaction between people and the exchange of information, views and opinions. Workshops and focus groups are familiar examples.

## Community visioning

Community visioning is a process which is based on the development of a shared future 'vision' for a community.  The approach has been adopted by a number of local authorities in the UK as part of their Local Agenda 21 processes.  Visioning seeks to involve all elements of a community, focuses on common ground and concentrates on the future.
A variety of techniques can be used within the visioning process, including Future search, focus groups and workshops.

## Future search

The Future search technique forms a key component of the community visioning approach described above.  It is based on a large group event, normally a conference, the purpose of which is to create a shared vision for a community with common goals, and to develop actions to achieve these goals.  The technique aims to involve all of the interests in a community in a way that regards all participants as equals and where the event is self-managed by all.

## Open space technology

Open space technology is an adaptation of the 'traditional' public meeting approach to community participation, which shares some similarities with Future search events. Open space meetings attempt to involve all those people who hold a 'stake' in a community, in the organisation and management of the event and the issues considered. The process is very flexible and 'open', with no fixed agenda, little formal structure and no 'experts', and much of the work is undertaken in small topic-based groups.

## Community planning weekends

Community planning weekends are large-scale events which primarily address community-based planning issues. They are generally convened and organised by professionals and statutory authorities in an attempt to involve local people in formulating proposals for the development of their community.

## Forums

Forums are regular or continuing area-based meetings of representatives from local groups and organisations, along with interested individuals, which normally come together to discuss a particular issue or concern, such as the environment. Forums have been widely established throughout the UK by local authorities to address the development and implementation of Local Agenda 21. Forums are also recognised as being an appropriate mechanism for involving groups who have been excluded from decision-making processes, such as ethnic minorities and young people.

## Roundtables/consensus building

Roundtables are devices for consensus building between possibly previously antagonistic parties. Usually made up of between 16 and 24 members, Roundtables have mainly focused on sustainability: environmentalists and industrialists, local authority employees and members of the public have met on an equal basis to build consensus by abandoning an adversarial approach and aiming to understand each other's point of view.

### Citizens' juries

Citizens' juries are made up of between 12 and 25 members, representing a cross-section of the community, who meet for (usually) 4 days, are given as much information as possible about an issue, hear evidence, cross-examine witnesses, discuss the issue amongst themselves and with witnesses, facilitated by moderators. Their findings are published in a report, which sets out disagreements as well as agreements.

## Planning for Real®

Planning for Real is a technique which uses a 3D model to enable people to put forward suggestions for improving their neighbourhood. Cut-out cards representing uses, problems or other issues are put on the model.  Consensus emerges through the pattern of distribution of the option cards.

## Village design statements

The Countryside Commission devised the process which culminates in a village design statement in order to influence the operation of the statutory planning system. Local people identify the distinction and diversity of their area in a statement. The aim is that village design statements be taken on as supplementary planning guidance so that future developments and changes are undertaken sympathetically.

## Parish maps

The parish map scheme was devised by Common Ground: the aim is to celebrate local distinctiveness and to help people to come together to chart what they value locally.

## Green Map

The Green Map System (GMS) is a locally adaptable, globally shared framework for environmental mapmaking. It invites design teams of all ages and backgrounds to illuminate the connections between natural and human environments by mapping their local urban or rural community. Using GMS's shared visual language, a collaboratively designed set of Icons representing the different kinds of green sites and cultural resources, Mapmakers are independently producing unique, regionally flavoured images that fulfil local needs, yet are globally connected.

# Further information

Participation Cymru
Tel: 0800 2888 329
www.participationcymru.org.uk

Community Development Cymru
www.cdcymru.org

Green Map
www.greenmap.com

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