

Guiding principles for public engagement:

Public engagement (PE) can be defined as a two-way process of exchange between the institution and the public. This process can generate mutual benefit, with all involved learning from each other through sharing knowledge, experience and expertise. There are different types or models of public engagement (e.g. informing, consulting, involving, devolving decisions) and a range of senses in which engagement may happen (from telling public groups about our work to creating knowledge in collaboration with communities and interest groups outside the university). PE can benefit academic and research activity.

Below are a list of considerations to ensure the success of any PE activities or mechanism, these are described as a series of guiding principles. These guiding principles have been developed drawing upon literature within the field (Rowe and Frewer 2000, Stilgoe 2003, Wynne *et al.* 2005) and the experiences of the UCL Public Engagement Unit, PE academics and practitioners. These provide a useful means to assess the effectiveness of PE, these are as follows:

- *Transparency* in the process and the decisions made. The PE activity should be transparent so that all of those involved (e.g. directors, staff and beneficiaries) can see and understand what is going on, particularly how decisions are being made.
- *Clarity and purpose*. It is important to set clear parameters for the PE activity. The nature and scope of PE should be clearly defined, this should, ideally, include both its expected output and the mechanisms of the activity. For example explaining levels of power and agency can be vital for managing expectations of those involved.
- The *relevance* of PE activity. The activity should be justified as being relevant, for example, is the activity useful or responsive to the audiences' needs?
- Application or *influence*. The result of the PE activity should have a genuine impact and be seen to do so; otherwise the activity could be seen as ineffectual. Thus, there should be clear acceptance beforehand as to how the output of the activity will be used.
- The *timing* of involvement. The timing of involvement of stakeholders in the PE activity should be considered to ensure that the involvement becomes salient.

- *Cost/resource effectiveness.* Value for money is a significant motivation for PE, which (in many circumstances) needs to be demonstrated. Effective PE requires access to appropriate and relevant resources (e.g. information, people, skills) to enable full involvement in activity.
- *Representative.* Those participating should consist of a representative sample of the public, or of the targeted group. The issues of 'representation' can also refer to the consideration of a range of viewpoints.
- *Audience focus.* The PE activity should be specific or tailored to certain factors or partners or audiences. There is a need to take the time to carefully think about the audience to identify and approach the right people, consider what interests them and why should they be involved.
- *Independence.* The PE activities should be conducted in an independent, unbiased way.
- Engage people both *meaningfully* and *respectfully*.
- *Evaluation and learning.* There is a need to consider how to evaluate the success of and learn from any PE activity undertaken.
- Build in time to critically *reflect* upon the activity or project.

References:

Rowe, G. and Frewer, L. (2000) Public Participation Methods: A Framework for Evaluation, *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 25(3), 3-29

Stilgoe, J. (2003) *Citizen Science*, DEMOS Publication

Wynne B., Stilgoe, J and Wilsdon, J. (2005) *The Public Value of Science*, DEMOS Publication

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