

Guide to Online Participation

The Guide to Online Participation will help State servants identify and develop exciting and innovative ways to engage with New Zealanders in policy and service design and delivery.

This work contributes to achieving a world-class professional State Services. The current Guide to Online Participation is the first step in an evolving area of theory and practice - it will be tested and refined, and we require your help to improve its contents.

To comment on the guide or share your ideas and experiences about online participation, please email participation@ssc.govt.nz to be set up with access to the ParticipatioNZ wiki (at <http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz>).

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How to use the Guide

The principles, processes and tools set out in this Guide are a starting point for making online participation work in your own context. Critically, there are no checklists: this Guide offers a basic walkthrough of the issues and risks associated with online participation. Your own judgement, experience, knowledge and creativity are needed for your success.

For new practitioners, this Guide is a practical primer for engaging people online. For more experienced practitioners, it is a call to find creative and effective ways of engaging the public, using information and communication technology, especially Web 2.0 technologies and social media.

This Guide focuses on online participation only. It does not cover electronic voting (e-voting) in elections which falls under the responsibility of the Chief Electoral Office.

The Guide was drafted online which is reflected in its structure and format. The sections are interconnected and relevant resources are hyperlinked to allow you to follow alternative paths through the material, depending on your interests and focus. There are three main parts.

- **Overview** - provides a brief but holistic introduction to Online Participation for all readers.
- **Snapshot** - offers a strategic review of each section's essential elements for policy officials and business managers.
- **Full story** - provides indepth assessment and more operational detail for those responsible for putting it all into practice.

1. Introducing the Guide to Online Participation

[A guide for navigating online participation.](#) This section provides a quick introductory tour of the main issues addressed in the Guide to Online Participation.

2. Purpose

[Why have a guide?](#) This section defines the scope and purpose of the Guide to Online Participation.

3. Principles

[Sound principles can stand the test of time.](#) This section sets out the core principles for online participation.

4. Implementation

[Good design puts principles into practice.](#) This section describes how to design successful online participation.

[Project management is where design hits reality.](#) This section describes how to successfully manage online participation.

[Evaluating to learn, learning to evaluate.](#) This section provides guidance for evaluating online participation.

5. Resources

[Want more? Need help? Look here.](#) This section provides tools, case studies, a glossary and links to useful resources for online participation projects

1. When government engages, Online Participation - an Introduction

Welcome and Kia Ora

E-government is about putting people first. It's not just about technology – it's about making government work for everyone.

People who are affected by public policy and services are in a good position to help improve them. Online participation is one way of seeking their views. It also responds to people's expectations that they will be more involved in the design and delivery of policy and services.

The Guide to Online Participation will help State servants navigate the complex and exciting terrain of technology-enabled public engagement. It embodies government commitment to achieving a world class professional State Services. This document introduces the Guide and highlights its key points.

The Guide is meant as a first step in an evolving area of theory and practice. It encourages us all to lead the way in applying and testing it. Given the pace of change, the Guide will go on being refined and improved based on new evidence and wider experience. Above all, the Guide is designed to reassure and encourage State servants as they explore innovative ways to engage with New Zealanders on the policies and services that matter most to them.

Download the Guide

Copies of the Guide to Online Participation can be found at: <http://participation.e.govt.nz>

This website provides a host of practical resources to build capacity and promote good practice across the State Services.

Get Started

- Apply the Guide.
- Improve the Guide.
- Share your experience.
- Visit the Participation wiki (<http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/>) for more resources.
- Ask us for advice: participation@ssc.govt.nz

Technology is changing

Personal computers and the Internet are increasingly facts of life in New Zealand.

Close to two-thirds of New Zealand's households are now online. Business, government and people use the Web to work, shop and play. Connecting is becoming easier than ever.

But the Digital Strategy goals of improved connection, confidence and content have yet to be achieved for all New Zealanders.

Today, 90 percent of young New Zealanders (15-24 years) have a mobile phone in their pocket. Today's digital generation are New Zealand's future. They will expect a 24/7 government that responds to their needs and is open to their ideas.

Just as New Zealanders are changing so too is the Internet. New applications allow users to create, share and link content as they develop communities on an unprecedented scale. These new interconnections are facilitated by the Internet - but extend beyond it.

This emerging online space is characterised by social networks, collaboration, expression and creativity. By linking ideas, stories and experience it provides a new public resource for collective action.

Online participation helps tap this new resource by making information available, enhancing consultation and providing new platforms for engagement.

So is technology the only thing that's changing?

People are changing

Trends

New Zealand will have greater ethnic diversity in the future. By 2039, one in four New Zealanders will be aged 65 or over. Two-thirds of New Zealand's population growth until 2026 will be in the Auckland region.

Voices

- *[Public servants] don't understand the real community environment. They just don't know, even though they think they know. -- Community leader*
- *Allow us to be valued participants in the formulation of policy, permit us to share our combined wisdom with you and most of all respect the voluntary commitment we continue to gift to our individual communities and allow us to sit at the table as equals. -- Community leader*
- *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*
- *...just jump on the website, click a button and suddenly we're participating with the government. Because we like everything to be instant, that's why we carry our phones around with us all the time. -- Secondary school student*

Expectations

New Zealanders' trust in public services depends on:

- their confidence that public servants do a good job
- the public service providing services that meet their needs
- public servants treating people fairly
- the public service keeping its promises
- the public service admitting responsibility when it makes mistakes.

So how do these changes affect services and policy?

Online participation can help

Online participation can help ministers and State servants:

make existing policy and services fit better with people's experiences and needs

navigate future uncertainty by tapping people's knowledge and experience to design better policies and services

focus the public's good will and knowledge on significant, complex problems that need local solutions (e.g. climate change, obesity, road safety).

Online participation can help people:

- understand the purposes and processes involved in designing and delivering policies and programmes
- enhance accountability for the results of policies and programmes
- contribute to improving policies and services affecting them
- create communities around issues people see as important.

Online participation cannot:

- make decisions for Ministers and State servants
- be the only means of reaching out to people -- many may not have access to the Internet
- be just about government -- it's about creating a two-way conversation.

So is anyone doing it in New Zealand?

Public institutions have to change

The Couch

The Couch (<http://www.thecouch.org.nz>) is the Families Commission's online panel. Since April 2006, 3000 people have signed up to answer online questionnaires and short polls that help the commission better understand the experience of New Zealand families.

One year on, The Couch is integral to the commission's policy process. Its latest national consultation with parents, children and caregivers on out-of-school services mixed traditional social research, in-person consultation workshops and 600 responses to The Couch questionnaire to create a compelling, detailed picture of people's concerns.

Safe As Road Safety Forum

The National Road Safety Committee, led by the Ministry of Transport, held 'pre-policy' stakeholder engagement workshops around New Zealand in July 2006. A critical component was the Safe As Road Safety Forum (www.safeas.govt.nz). The forum is an online discussion board for stakeholders to engage the Ministry and each other in a discussion about road safety policy for New Zealand.

The discussions helped steer the National Road Safety Policy Statement, issued on 13 December 2006 by the Minister of Transport, Hon Annette King, and Transport Safety

Minister, Hon Harry Duynhoven. Long after the end of the official process, the road safety forum community lives on, adding value to ongoing policy development. Ministry staff continue to use the platform to work with stakeholders, share ideas and supply information to concerned individuals. Open attitudes and collegial relationships built online have meant fewer requests under the Official Information Act and letters to Ministers.

Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council

Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council (www.bioethics.org.nz) engages New Zealanders in discussing the cultural, spiritual and ethical aspects of biotechnology. To date, the council has facilitated dialogue on human embryo testing, human gene modification and animal-to-human gene transplantation.

By combining the expertise of scientists, ethicists and religious leaders, with the skill of facilitation and communication professionals, the council has engaged thousands of members of the general public in face-to-face, deliberative discussions about these highly complex and sensitive issues. Its online efforts support this engagement, supplying digestible and interesting content to inform and encourage discussion.

Can we mainstream online participation?

Prepare for the future today

Meeting the needs of New Zealanders and serving the government of the day calls for a world class State Services ...

... one that can harness the power of technology-enabled interactivity, collaboration and engagement to design better services and policies ...
... today and tomorrow.

Why has the State Services Commission produced this Guide?

To promote State Services that are networked, co-ordinated, accessible and trusted. To help agencies reap the benefits and mitigate the risks of online participation. To produce better designed and more responsive policies and services.

How has the State Services Commission produced this Guide?

With the input and advice of members of a wide-ranging Participation Community of Practice, drawn from central and local government, the private sector and civil society.

By 2020, people's engagement with the government will have been transformed, as increasing and innovative use is made of the opportunities offered by network technologies.

How do we promote good practice?

Apply principles

Clarity

Be clear. Be open and transparent about the objectives, limits, resources and potential impacts of online participation.

Respect

Demonstrate respect. Respect for the contributions, perspectives, values and prerogatives of people, stakeholders, elected representatives and public servants.

Confidence and commitment

Build confidence as a basis for commitment. Online participation is a new practice for decision makers, people and stakeholders. Give it time, prove its worth.

Creativity

Be creative. New tools mean new approaches. Success hinges on innovation.

Inclusion

Be inclusive. Go to where people are. Make every effort to ensure accessibility and connect with all relevant communities, online and off.

Accountability

Be accountable. Online participation is a multi-stakeholder process where everyone is accountable.

Achievement

Make a difference. Strive for, build on and celebrate achievements in using online participation as a means for people, government, communities and businesses to achieve their goals.

Tools for engaging online will change over time. Principles guiding their application must be future-proof.

What next?

Help chart the path to 2020

2007 Test and review the Guide Online resource pool Mentoring

2010 Capacity building Performance review Evaluation

2020 Intrinsic and embedded Multilingual & mobile platforms Longitudinal analysis

Finding the Guide

Copies of the Guide to Online Participation can be found at <http://participation.e.govt.nz>

This website provides a host of practical resources to build capacity and promote good practice across the State Services.

Endnotes

The Digital Strategy: Creating our Digital Future (2005).

See: <http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz>

Picture of the Internet by Hal Burch and Bill Cheswick, appeared in Wired Magazine (December 1998). See: <http://www.cheswick.com/ches/map/gallery/wired.gif>

Statistics New Zealand Population Projections.

See: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/datasets/population/population-projections.htm>

Satisfaction and Trust in the State Services (2007).

See: <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?DocID=6049>

2. Purpose

Snapshot

Voices

"We like everything to be instant, that's why we carry our phones around with us all the time." -- College student

"If we regard the law as programming code, then we currently have a cathedral model with outdated code which is poorly executed. What we need is to shift to open source code where success is predicated on 'release early, release often' and where 'many eyeballs make bugs shallow'." -- Workshop participant

Quote

"By 2020, people's engagement with the government will have been transformed, as increasing and innovative use is made of the opportunities offered by network technologies."

2006 E-government Strategy (<http://www.e.govt.nz/about-egovt/strategy/>)

Key messages

- To meet future challenges government, at all levels, will need to use all available channels to draw on a wider range of knowledge and ideas than ever before. Technology is one small part of the picture.
- New Zealand has set ambitious goals for transforming government. These are expressed as concrete development goals for the State Services and milestones for e-government.
- This Guide to Online Participation is designed to support State servants as they explore how to use new tools to engage with New Zealanders. It is a living document that will need regular updating to reflect a rapidly changing environment and what we have learned.

Highlights

- The future is here. Technologies and people are changing. Internet and Web 2.0 applications are enabling new forms of social networking and collaboration. State services are changing to keep pace with these changes and online participation is part of the picture.
- Why is participation important? Public participation can help improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of service delivery through crowdsourcing, user-centred design and tighter feedback loops. It can also improve the quality of public policy and the chances of successful implementation.
- Who is this Guide for? New Zealand State Services that are seeking to provide people with additional electronic channels for engaging with government on policy and service design, development and delivery.

- Who helped to develop this guide? A broad-based community of practice with members drawn from across the State Services, local government, business and civil society.
- Why has the State Services Commission developed this Guide? The State Services Commission is committed to leading thinking and development of good public sector management practice. Part of its job is to help agencies to achieve the Development Goals for State Services, reach the E-government Strategy milestones and deliver on the Digital Strategy.
- How to use the Guide. This Guide is a practical primer for both newcomers to the field and experienced practitioners seeking to engage people online. It supports State servants in using new tools to improve service delivery and policy design.
- What online participation can and cannot do. Online participation is neither a panacea nor a gimmick. It offers an important additional channel for conducting meaningful public participation.

Full story

1. The future is here
2. Why is participation important?
3. Who is this Guide for?
4. Who helped to develop this Guide?
5. Why has the State Services Commission developed this Guide?
6. How to use the Guide
7. What online participation can and cannot do
8. Links
 - Policy context
 - Future trends

The future is here

Technologies are changing. Information and communication technologies (ICTs), like personal computers and the Internet, are facts of life in New Zealand. Close to two-thirds of New Zealand households are now online. More than 90 percent of New Zealand businesses use the Internet. Business, government and people use the Web to work, shop and play. Today, 90 percent of young New Zealanders (aged 15-24 years) have a mobile phone in their pocket. Connecting is easier than ever.

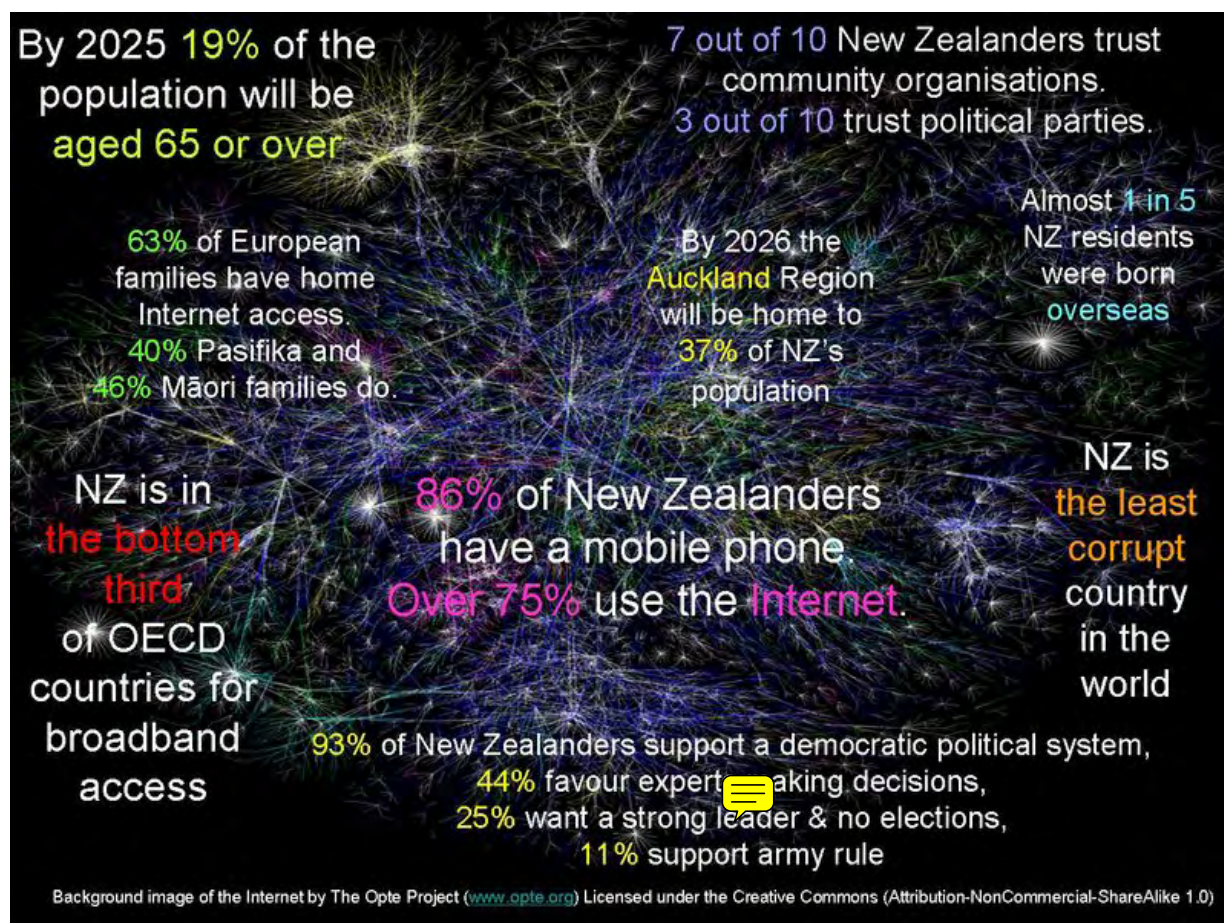
People are changing. The Internet is evolving, as shown by the rise of [social media](#) and [Web 2.0](#) applications. This new online space is about social networks and collaboration. It is powered by people's expression, curiosity and creativity. Today's digital generation has come of age in this environment and is New Zealand's future.

State Services are changing. E-government is not just about technology -- it's about putting people first. It's about making government work for you. The [E-government Strategy](#) aims to help agencies reap the benefits, minimise the risks and meet New Zealanders' expectations for online service delivery and participation - today and in the future.

Online participation as a social setting: Government's role in online participation is like a shopping arcade. An arcade is an open public space where people are free to move and gather. Along its edges are shopfronts or cafes which invite the public to enter and feel welcome. Once inside the shop or cafe, people are in a quasi-public space. It's highly structured and their behaviour is constrained by the owner's expectations. If people have a positive experience they may become 'regulars' and even tell others about the shop. At the same time, shop owners can take proactive steps to mingle with the crowds in the arcade. They can take part in conversations to find out what potential visitors are saying and how they express their likes, dislikes and needs. This Guide is designed to support State agencies in shaping good online participation. It aims to help you design an attractive shopfront and provide useful content and an environment that encourages exchange and discussion. It also recognises that many of the most meaningful conversations may be taking place beyond your front door.

Online participation is part of the solution. The Internet and other technologies will not replace all the other ways government relates to people. Better technology alone does not guarantee better public sector performance. Success also depends on improving the design, operation and culture of the public sector, so that it can better respond to New Zealanders' changing demands. A multi-channel approach that combines traditional and electronic tools to engage people, is more likely to reach a wider, more diverse audience and contribute to better policy and service. The contours of this emerging [Participation 2.0 model](#) have yet to be defined. But clearly the model offers government new opportunities and new challenges.

Diagram 1: The future is here



Sources: [2006 Social Report](#), [Public Life Values](#), [December 2005](#).

Why is participation important?

Finding solutions to the host of complex problems facing New Zealand -- today and in the future -- calls for all-of-government approaches. These need to respond to people's expectations that they will be more involved in the design and delivery of government policies and services.

Participation means more than consultation. It includes providing government information to people in ways that make it accessible and relevant, and creating opportunities for people to be actively involved in the design and delivery of government policies and services. Public participation is nothing new. Nor are efforts to describe it. Sherry R. Arnstein's seminal article proposing "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" (<http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>) may date from 1969, but it is by no means dated. Many variations on the theme have been proposed since then. See also OECD and IAP2 definitions.

Strengthening opportunities for [public participation](#) allows State Services to:

- tap into New Zealanders' collective wisdom to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of service delivery - for the public and businesses - through [crowdsourcing](#) and [user centred design](#)
- improve the quality of evidence which informs decision-making and the [policy cycle](#)
- save time and money by inviting the public and businesses to participate at the outset, instead of facing possible delays and potentially costly legal challenges once policy and services are put in place
- enhance their transparency, relevance, legitimacy and accountability to the public
- enhance their own understanding of the opinions and interests of the public and businesses
- increase public trust and understanding by providing greater opportunities for direct involvement and tighter [feedback loops](#)
- encourage individuals and communities to take action and help achieve public goals by drawing on, and adding to, government-held [information](#)
- strengthen democracy by supporting the public's active involvement in decision making, leading to better governance, stronger [civil society](#) and greater [social capital](#).

Who is this Guide for?

This Guide is designed to help New Zealand State Services to use electronic channels to give people opportunities to engage with government on policy and service design, development and delivery.

The Guide:

- presents the core **principles** that support online participation
- explains how agencies can **implement** online participation through attention to **design, management and evaluation**
- offers a range of tools and **resources** to support people's online engagement with government.

Our primary audience is New Zealand State servants (including policy analysts, business managers, communications managers and technical officers) as they navigate this complex and

exciting terrain. But we hope it will also be useful to a wider audience, such as local government officials, politicians, civil society organisations and international practitioners. It is meant as a first step in an evolving area of theory and practice. It will be subject to constant refinement and improvement as we gather new evidence and experience. It is designed to provide reassurance and encouragement to agencies that want to be creative as they explore new ways to engage.

Who helped to develop this Guide?

In developing this Guide, the project team at the State Services Commission (SSC) has sought to practise what it preaches. As a first step, it invested time and effort in building up a broad network of practitioners of public participation, online and offline. The Participation Community of Practice (PCoP) was officially launched at a workshop in Wellington on 7 December 2006. Members were drawn from across the State Services, local government, business and civil society. They continued to meet regularly from February 2007 at bimonthly lunchtime discussion sessions on participation hosted at the SSC.

One of the main requests from members at the 2006 workshop was for an online space to complement face-to-face meetings. On 30 March 2007 the ParticipatioNZ wiki was launched as a password-protected online platform with more than 100 registered members.

The wiki had the three-fold aim of providing:

- a social networking platform
- a shared knowledge resource pool
- a 'sandpit' where members could track and provide input to developing the Guide.

Indeed, during April 2007, the Guide was drafted entirely on the wiki. Any member was able to comment or edit the text as its drafting unfolded under their gaze. This Guide is itself the product of an unprecedented experiment in online participation in policy development.

The project team would like to acknowledge the many novel ideas, the friendly advice and constructive criticism provided by PCoP members. Their efforts have contributed greatly to strengthening the Guide's focus. Of course, any omissions or errors in the Guide are the responsibility of the project team.

Why has the State Services Commission developed this Guide?

The State Services Commission is committed to leading thinking and development of good public sector management practice. It has a leadership role in the field of **e-government** and in achieving the **Development Goals for State Services** (http://www.ssc.govt.nz/upload/downloadable_files/Development-Goals-diagram.pdf) while contributing actively to the **Digital Strategy**. This Guide to Online Participation contributes to all three of these strategic government goals.

The State Services Commission provides leadership and support, develops e-government strategy and policy, fosters collaboration and co-ordination and assesses progress towards achieving the e-government milestones. Agencies deliver e-government in partnership with other players including users, local government, intermediaries and ICT providers. This Guide is a first step along the path to achieving an ambitious milestone, namely that:

By 2020, people's engagement with the government will have been transformed, as increasing and innovative use is made of the opportunities offered by network technologies.

The Development Goals for State Services aim to improve the overall performance of the State Services to ensure the system can meet the needs of New Zealanders, while serving the government of the day. This Guide to Online Participation is also designed to contribute to the achievement of the Development Goals, in particular those for Networked, Co-ordinated, Accessible and Trusted State Services.

The Digital Strategy aims to ensure New Zealand is a world leader in using information and technology to realise economic, environmental, social and cultural goals. The Digital Strategy isn't just about technology, it's about people and their ability to connect to the things that matter to them. From the perspective of online participation this is where the Digital Strategy is most relevant, given its commitment to enhancing:

- **content** which is the information made available through digital networks
- **confidence** and the development of the necessary skills at all ages, in all parts of society, to use and participate in ICT effectively
- **connection** which is about having affordable access to ICT infrastructure such as telecommunications networks, computers, mobile phones and other devices. The other key element is understanding the benefits of connection.

Online participation is clearly enhanced by a supporting infrastructure and efforts to reduce digital and other divides. The issue of ensuring high speed broadband access to New Zealanders goes beyond the scope of this Guide, but without reliable, effective and affordable connection to the Internet the principles outlined in the next section cannot be fully applied. As a recent statement by the Mayor of Wellington suggests, Internet access will soon be part of the bundle of basic services expected by twenty-first century New Zealanders.

"The Council has a history of ensuring access to basic services such as water, sewerage and roads. Broadband is rapidly becoming one of these basic services." --Mayor Kerry Prendergast (27 April 2007)

What online participation can and cannot do

Online participation can help **Ministers and State servants** to:

- make existing policy and services fit better with people's experiences and needs
- navigate future uncertainty by tapping people's knowledge and experience to design better policies and services
- focus the public's good will and knowledge on big, complex problems that need local solutions (eg climate change, obesity, road safety).

Online participation can help **people** to:

- understand the purposes and processes involved in designing and delivering policies and programmes
- enhance accountability for the results of policies and programmes
- contribute to improving policies and services affecting them
- create communities around issues they see as important
- feel they can contribute and that government acknowledges and values their input.

Online participation **cannot**:

- make decisions for accountable Ministers and State servants
- be the only means of reaching out to people - many may not have access to the Internet
- be just about government - it's about creating a two-way conversation.

Links

Policy context

- Development Goals for the State Services , March 2005 (<http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?DocID=5438>)
- Digital Strategy: Creating our Digital Future, May 2005 (<http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/>)
- Draft New Zealand Digital Content Strategy Discussion Document, November 2006 (http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/templates/Page_____120.aspx#Discussion%20Document)
- E-government Strategy, November 2006 (<http://www.e.govt.nz/about-egovt/strategy/>)

Future trends

- 2006 Social Report (<http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/>)
- Our future: trends for land transport (<http://www.ltsa.govt.nz/about/land-transport-trends.html>)
- Future of Work (<http://www.dol.govt.nz/futureofwork/>)
- Future of secondary education (<http://www.secondaryfutures.co.nz/>)

3. Principles

Sound principles can stand the test of time. This section sets out the core principles for online participation.

Snapshot

Voices

"Allow us to be valued participants in the formulation of policy, permit us to share our combined wisdom with you and most of all respect the voluntary commitment we continue to gift to our individual communities and allow us to sit at the table as equals." -- Community leader

Quote

To add value, however, e-participation schemes need to be shaped by certain principles. At a minimum, if they are to be seen as legitimate and worthwhile they must involve a commitment to being inclusive of hard to reach groups on the one hand and a clear commitment by authorities to respond to citizen communications received over the internet on the other. -- *Local E-Democracy Needs a Boost*, Institute of Public Policy Research, UK (<http://www.ippr.org/articles/archive.asp?id=299&fID=52>)

Key messages

- Principles for online participation are the bridge between our current practice and our future aspirations.
- The tools for online participation will change over time. The principles guiding their application must be future-proof.
- To be of value, principles for online participation must be able to be applied in practice.

Principles for online participation

The following principles are not listed in any priority and should be regarded as mutually reinforcing. They serve to guide online participation initiatives. They should not be seen as detracting from, or supplementing, agencies' existing legal obligations regarding access to information and consultation.

Clarity

Be clear. Be open and transparent about the objectives, limits, resources and potential impacts of online participation.

Respect

Demonstrate respect. Show respect for the contributions, perspectives, values and prerogatives of people, stakeholders, elected representatives and public servants.

Confidence & commitment

Build confidence as a basis for commitment. Online participation is a new practice for decision makers, people and stakeholders. Give it time, prove its worth.

Creativity

Be creative. New tools mean new approaches. Success hinges on innovation.

Inclusion

Be inclusive. Go to where people are. Make every effort to be accessible and connect with all relevant communities, online and offline.

Accountability

Be accountable. Online participation is a multistakeholder process where everyone is accountable.

Achievement

Make a difference. Strive for, build on and celebrate achievements in using online participation as a means for people, government, communities and businesses to achieve their goals.

Full story

Why have principles for participation?

The **seven** principles for online participation set out in this Guide to Online Participation:

- are intended to underpin development and implementation of online participation methods and tools across the State Services
- can help guide State Services in designing, implementing and evaluating their online engagement
- contribute to ensuring consistently high quality government engagement with people when using technology
- are the basis for achieving the 2020 milestone set out in the E-government Strategy.

These principles draw on valuable input from members of the Participation Community of Practice (PCoP) at two workshops (held on 7 December 2006 and 7 May 2007 in Wellington) and other channels - see SSC case study for more details ([http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/State_Services_Commission: Online Participation Project Case Study](http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/State_Services_Commission:_Online_Participation_Project_Case_Study)). They also build on the principles developed by other New Zealand public sector organisations and in other jurisdictions and at the international level.

What is a principle?

Principles are fundamental assumptions, laws or requirements which form the basis for reasoning or action. They have the following characteristics when applied to public policy:

- they articulate the basis - the 'why?' - of the policies
- they reflect concerns, risks, issues and emphases
- adherence to them can be qualitatively assessed.

Source: *New Zealand Government Trusted Computing and Digital Rights Management Principles and Policies* (<http://www.e.govt.nz/policy/tc-and-drm/principles-policies-06/chapter1.html>)

Principles for online participation

The following principles are not listed in any priority and should be regarded as mutually reinforcing. They serve to guide online participation initiatives. They should not be seen as detracting from, or supplementing, agencies' existing legal obligations regarding access to information and consultation.

Clarity

Be clear. Be open and transparent about the objectives, limits, resources and potential impacts of online participation. Be clear about:

- what the issues and questions are
- how the process works
- the role played by government -- as the instigator, facilitator or observer of public participation
- how to make an impact on the process
- who will make the final decision, how they will make it and how they will inform participants about the outcomes
- the fact that disagreement is natural, but should also be cordial
- the time, energy and resources needed to participate effectively
- how to become informed about the issues.

Respect

Demonstrate respect. Show respect for the contributions, perspectives, values and prerogatives of people, stakeholders, elected representatives and public servants. Demonstrate respect for:

- people for their contributions which reflect their own opinions, expert and experiential knowledge
- the unique knowledge and customs of the diverse peoples of Aotearoa/New Zealand
- people's multiple roles in life (eg as parents, partners, students, professionals, farmers)
- terms and conditions for online engagement that promote civil behaviour, constructive criticism, active listening and discussion
- different viewpoints and perspectives
- different levels of ability and the need to use multiple channels when providing information and seeking engagement
- people's time by ensuring engagement with them is co-ordinated across government to minimise duplication and overlap.

Confidence and commitment

Build confidence as a basis for commitment. Online participation is a new practice for people, stakeholders, elected representatives and public servants. Give it time, prove its worth. Genuine commitment is built by building confidence:

- among government decision makers, for whom online participation is a relatively untested way of gathering information for developing policy and designing services
- by making it easy for people to engage online -- for many this may be a new and challenging channel
- in the technologies and in those charged with facilitating, moderating or supporting online interactions and deliberations
- by providing timely feedback and evidence that online participation can be an effective tool for meeting the needs of people, decision makers and stakeholders
- by evaluating online participation to learn from your experience and improve quality in the future.

Creativity

Be creative. New tools mean new approaches. Success hinges on innovation. Be creative about:

- involving people in designing online participation and inviting their feedback on how it went
- how you build public awareness and encourage people to participate
- creating content that will hook people into your process
- making the most of technology -- audio, video, web, print -- and integrating it into online and offline engagement processes
- who you work with to mobilise resources and ensure success -- build sustainable relationships with community groups, civil society and others
- facilitating discussion--make every interaction worthwhile.

Inclusion

Be inclusive. Go to where people are. Make every effort to be accessible and connect with all relevant communities, online and offline. Be inclusive by:

- taking a broad perspective of who needs to be informed and engaged
- being proactive and making particular efforts to reach a diverse range of people, especially those typically considered 'hard to reach'
- recognising that Māori, as *tangata whenua* and by virtue of the Treaty of Waitangi, have a unique relationship with government. This requires government to ensure that Māori are involved in making decisions on matters that affect them and to take positive steps to ensure their interests are protected
- designing online participation to fit the needs of community members as well as those of agencies (eg providing information in other languages, favouring video over text to facilitate oral traditions)
- reducing barriers to online participation and adhering to Web standards for accessibility (<http://www.e.govt.nz/standards/web-guidelines>).

Accountability

Be accountable. Online participation is a multistakeholder process where everyone is accountable. Be accountable for:

- the use of public funds in undertaking online participation
- ensuring that people's time has been well used and recognised
- fair and appropriate management of content generated by public participation
- the process of public participation and its outcomes
- actions and behaviour online given the terms and conditions established for online engagement (for the public) and the Code of Conduct for the State Services Standards of Integrity and Conduct (for State servants)
- decisions once they are taken, and for providing feedback to participants.

Achievement

Make a difference. Strive for, build on and celebrate achievements in using online participation as a means for people, government, communities and businesses to achieve their goals. Ensure a sense of achievement by:

- explicitly recognising people's individual contributions and collective endeavours
- providing evidence that people's online participation is making a difference
- designing the online process to deliver immediate benefits in terms of knowledge, understanding, new skills and a sense of personal efficacy
- ensuring that online participation is tightly coupled to actions that lead to clear improvements in decision-making processes and outcomes
- highlighting the obstacles or challenges that online participation may help to overcome
- communicating and celebrating results.

Links (New Zealand)

- Office for Community and Voluntary Sector: Good Practice Participate website (<http://www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz/>)
- *Social Inclusion and Participation: A Guide for Policy and Planning* (<http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/work-areas/social-research/sip-guide-2007.doc>) Bromell D. and Hyland M., Social Inclusion and Participation Group, Ministry of Social Development, March 2007.
- Ministry of Justice: A Guide for Consultation with Maori (http://www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/reports/1998/maori_consultation/process.html) (1997).
- The Office of Ethnic Affairs Ethnic Perspectives in Policy (EPP) framework (http://www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz/oeawebsite.nsf/wpg_url/Resources-Ethnic-Affairs-Publications-Ethnic-Perspectives-In-Policy) (2002).
- Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs: Pacific Consultation Guidelines (http://www.minpac.govt.nz/resources_tools_pacificconsultationguidelines.htm)
- Ministry of Youth Development: Guidance on effective youth participation (<http://www.myd.govt.nz/Youthparticipation/effectivelyouthparticipation.aspx>) and Levels of youth participation (<http://www.myd.govt.nz/Youthparticipation/levelsofparticipation.aspx>)

- Local Government New Zealand: Growing Active Citizens project (<http://www.lgnz.co.nz/projects/ActiveCitizens>) and Children's Toolkit (<http://www.lgnz.co.nz/projects/archive/toolkit/index.html>)
- Tangata Whenua, Community and Voluntary Sector Research Centre: Code of Practice (<http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/COP.htm>) (2007).

Links (International)

- Australia (Commonwealth) Principles for ICT-Enabled Citizen Engagement (http://www.agimo.gov.au/practice/delivery/checklists/citizen_engage_principles) and speech by Special Minister for State Gary Nairn
- Australia (Queensland) Queensland: E-democracy policy framework 2004 (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Queensland:_E-democracy_policy_framework_2004)
- UK Principles for Youth Participation (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/UK_Principles_for_Youth_Participation)
- Canada Citizen and Community Engagement (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Public_Health_Agency_of_Canada%2C_Atlantic_Region_-_Citizen_and_Community_Engagement)
- Finland Principles of Citizen Consultation (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Enhancing_citizen_consultation_in_Finnish_ministries#Principles_of_Citizen_Consultation)
- OECD Guiding principles for successful information, consultation and active participation of citizens in policy-making (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/OECD_-_Citizens_as_Partners:_Information%2C_Consultation_and_Participation_in_Policy_Making%2C_2001)

4. Implementation

- Good design
- Project management
- Evaluation

4.1 Good design

Snapshot

Voices

"The public is often asked to participate at the wrong stage, and on the wrong things. There is a lot of poor design of opportunities to participate." -- Workshop participant

Quote

"Others approach a problem from the point of view that says, 'We have the smartest people in the world; therefore, we can think this through'. We approach it from the point of view that the answer is out there, hidden in plain sight, so let's go observe human behaviour and see where the opportunities are." -- David Kelley, IDEO.com

Key messages

- Design your entire online participation initiative so that it provides meaningful and timely information for participants, stakeholders and government decision-makers.
- Ensure that content is engaging, relevant and appropriate for the chosen platform and intended audience.
- Provide participants with a sense of achievement. This may mean that they have reached goals, overcome challenges, deepened their understanding or learned new skills.
- Embed evaluation into your design of online participation.

Highlights

- What's different about online participation? Public participation is not new. But online participation can offer some unique and novel tools, which can help overcome longstanding obstacles of time, disability and distance. Online participation also presents new challenges.
- Take feedback seriously: Taking feedback seriously means thinking about the whole process of engagement, and finding creative ways to use and present information and evidence to make it work for everyone involved.
- Prepare the ground: Designing a successful online engagement process is a multi-stakeholder endeavour. Involve Ministers and senior management in early discussions of your plans as well as content and technology experts, community organisations, businesses, potential participants and other stakeholders when shaping the process.

- Designing for participation: Your task is to create a social setting that prompts reflection, fosters constructive and creative discussion and leads to action. You will need to focus simultaneously on process and content design.
- Generate discussion: Make it easy to participate, encourage multimedia expression and connect people with one another. Remember the 1 percent rule and use passionate users to reach out to, rather than exclude, others.
- Present results: Make the results of online participation easy to understand by using data visualisation tools and clear, concise summaries. Close the feedback loop by ensuring all participants are informed about the results of decision makers' deliberations and next steps.

Full story

What's different about online participation?

Public participation is by no means new. For the most part, you will need to build on your experience of the offline environment when designing for online participation. At the same time, online participation poses new challenges and requires close attention to the basics of online project design.

Online participation offers some unique and novel characteristics which can help overcome the obstacles of time, disability and distance.

- **Time**
 - turning up for public meetings -- participation is now not time-bound in the same way; you can participate at different times during the day
 - more attuned to today's lifestyles -- life used to be nine to five with shops closed at 5.30pm and on the weekends; Internet interaction can occur at any time including outside normal office hours
 - participants can discuss issues over a period of time, and at different times from one another, which allows time for reflective debate.
- **Location**
 - transcending place -- participation can be open to all, regardless of geographical location, including expatriate New Zealanders
 - enabling access by people who can't physically be present at offline participation, e.g. meetings
 - connecting with virtual communities beyond Wellington -- for example, you can connect with postgraduate students in other countries on your research topic or families can keep in touch, e.g. Pacific virtual communities.
- **Interaction**
 - different media are available -- you can present ideas and policies using various media instead of just written material -- audio (podcasts), visual (written and video), touch (multi-input touch screens); but make sure the way you use these media doesn't exclude any groups, such as those with impaired vision
 - sharing knowledge and creating ideas -- you can build on other ideas and content (eg wiki).

- **Range of participants**

- tap into the 'silent majority' -- gives people the freedom to comment online whereas public debate in a meeting might only hear from, and be heard by, a few
- digital communications media have the potential to handle contributions from large numbers of people whereas traditional methods have difficulty doing this
- online debate overcomes the obstacles that may prevent some people from participating in an offline debate -- for example, the deaf, the blind or those with limited mobility who might not be able to go to a public meeting; armed with Internet access, a browser and assistive technologies, anyone can participate in public debate online.

At the same time, online participation requires strategic thought and careful risk assessment in several areas. These include the following.

- **Digital divide**

If online and offline participation are not aligned, offline participants could be disenfranchised. Conversely, online users' needs could be neglected if online participation tools are not introduced.

- **Resource demands**

Online participation methods need time, expertise and funding as well as supporting systems and infrastructure. These should be weighed against the risks associated with poor policy and service design and delivery that do not meet public needs. Also consider the longer-term costs to government from reduced trust, legitimacy and effectiveness.

- **Incomplete participation**

Problems with participation are not adequately resolved -- for example, the circulation of information and timeliness of its delivery, the publicity it receives, central government's relationship with other levels of government, insufficient differentiation of the audience involved, weak relations between government agencies and sectors, and scarce visibility on relevant websites

- **Lack of co-ordination across government**

Initiatives to improve the opportunity for people to participate are created in an ad hoc manner, without collaboration or co-ordination across government; knowledge transfer is therefore limited and stakeholders may be bombarded with various invitations to participate from different parts of government.

- **Perceived challenges to representative democracy**

Some stakeholders may see online participation as undermining New Zealand's system of representative democracy. On the contrary -- online participation extends Ministers' ability to hear from the public through public servants. And it improves the quality of agency policy and service proposals by ensuring they are 'roadtested' with the people concerned or affected before they are submitted for final decision.

Take feedback seriously

If you ask people about what makes participation satisfying, they often talk about the importance of feedback -- either in terms of hearing what other people think of their ideas, or their contribution to an overall result.

Online tools are powerful media for providing such feedback. This is because, unlike most face-to-face conversations, the record of online interaction persists in all its detail -- from counting page-views and following click-paths, to recording the full content of someone's contributions. Moreover, this information is easily shared. People's ideas, and their paths to these ideas, can be revealed and shared across the Web to help like-minded, or unlike-minded people, find one another, discuss and generate new knowledge.

Acknowledging this environment means thinking differently about generating and gathering feedback from the public through online participation initiatives. It presents an excellent opportunity to pass on participants' ideas in their own words and in their own way, instead of just through facilitator summaries or flip-chart notes. It means going beyond 'thank you for your contribution' automatic emails. It means looking for novel ways to connect contributors inside your Web community and out into the wider ecosystem of online discussion that is happening elsewhere.

In short, it means thinking differently about information and knowledge -- about how they move, and where and when they can be used to help people recognise that they are an important part of your process -- and to gather the evidence you need to improve the particular service or policy you're dealing with. (For more details, see: Great Feedback! Online Engagement in New Zealand (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Great_Feedback%21_Online_Engagement_in_New_Zealand).

Generating and gathering feedback online means doing a variety of things to motivate people to contribute, share and find one another. Social media technologies like [blogging](#), social bookmarking sites (like [del.icio.us](#)), and video sharing sites (like [YouTube](#)) owe much of their success to showing and syndicating information about how people are participating on their sites. They use tagging, tag clouds, RSS feeds, email newsletters, links and mini-applications called application programming interfaces (APIs) that let people present content, not just on the main sites like YouTube, but anywhere across the Web.

All these high-tech terms distract from the following basic strategies for how social media and Web 2.0 sites treat and value user-generated information.

- **Make it findable.** Search is good, but tangible evidence that the discussion is happening is better. 'Most viewed' or 'latest discussions' are simple ways of showing that evidence, and are based on how people click their way through your site.
- **Make it navigable.** Create linkages between related contributions, so that one contribution leads to another, which leads to another, and so on. This breaks down isolation between participants, gives them a sense of discovery and encourages them to respond to new things they've found. Tagging and tag clouds are one great way of making user-generated content navigable, by helping people see connections between their ideas and the ideas of others.
- **Make it portable.** Prompt people to bring the discussion into their own context -- at home, at work, or on other sites. This will draw in more people to the discussion and

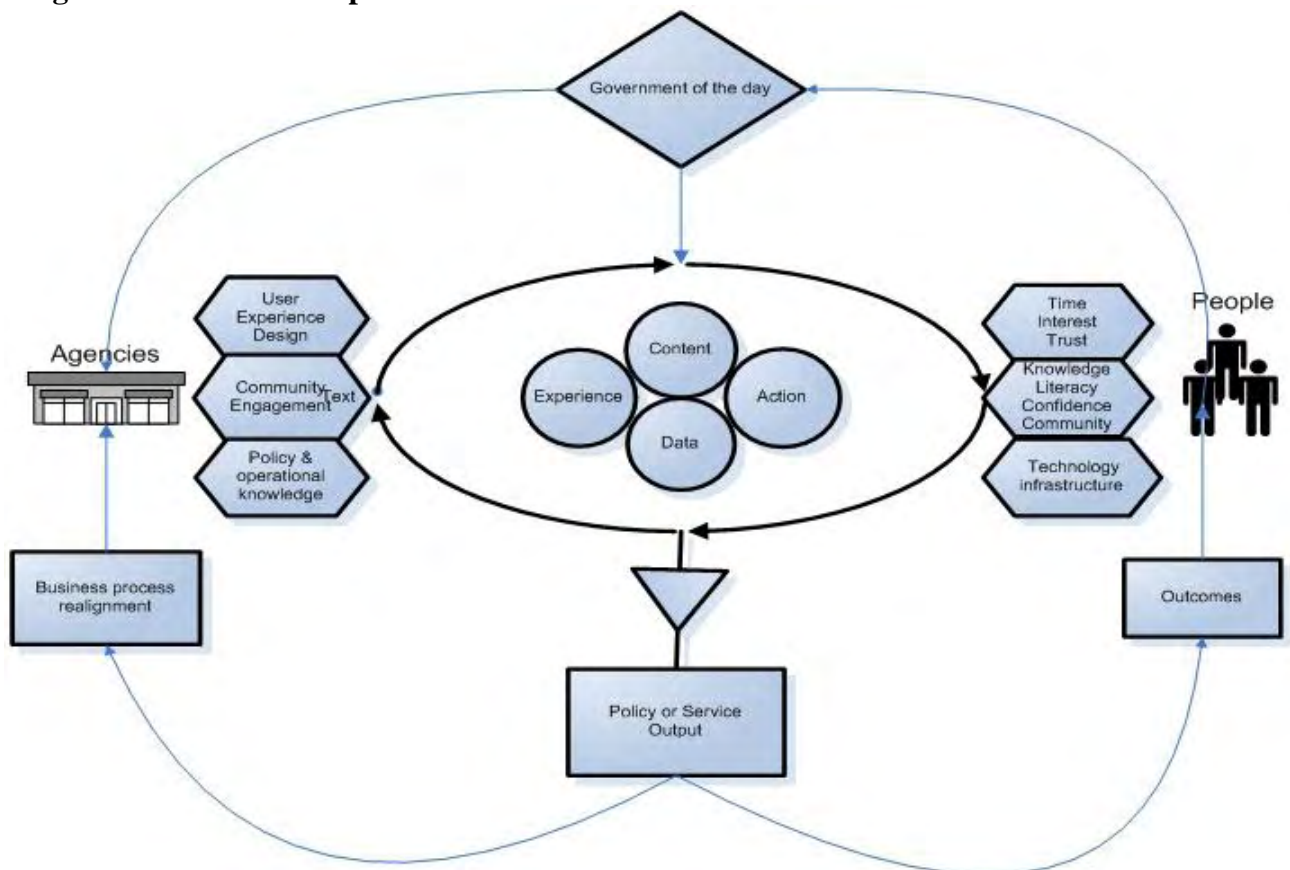
help everyone feel connected to what's happening on their own terms. APIs, widgets and gadgets are key tools for doing this.

- **Make it personable.** It's important to know that there is a someone -- not a something - - behind the ideas. Social media, like blogs, are compelling because they have personality and a sense of authenticity behind them. Seek ways for people to add personality to their contributions.

These strategies are only important insofar as they help to create conversation. And the conversation is important because it helps to engage people in improving policies and services within your agency. Thus, gathering and generating feedback is about more than just a Web-platform. It is also about working with senior management, Ministers and other stakeholders to ensure the questions you ask the public are well-designed and the responses they generate are valued and listened to. This means thinking of your online systems and processes, including departmental websites, as services to improve decision-making by connecting more people into the policy development and service design process.

Taking feedback seriously means thinking about the whole process of engagement, and finding creative ways to use and present information and evidence to make it work for all the players -- including Ministers, senior management, stakeholders and participants.

Diagram 3: Feedback loop



Prepare the ground

Designing a successful online engagement process is a multi-stakeholder endeavour. You will want to involve Ministers and senior management in early discussions of your plans. You will also want to encourage content and technology experts, community organisations, businesses

and other stakeholders to be involved in shaping the process. This input will be invaluable for determining what questions you need to ask, who you really need to engage, what their information needs are, the channels you can use and what sort of sensitivities and risk you will need to plan for. In particular, you will need to think about the following.

- **Focus on your own information needs.** What is it that your agency needs to know? Who is the audience you need to speak with and can they respond effectively? Is your agency prepared to respond to what it hears in kind? There is no point asking questions that cannot be answered or have no value for making decisions about improvements or strategic direction. Moreover, if your information needs are best served by basic answers to relatively simple questions, then a survey may be more appropriate than an engagement process. But if the issue is complex and solicits competing and reasonable views, then engaging the public in working through that complexity may be the right move to make.
- **Ministers and senior management are important allies in making participation processes work well.** Ministers and senior management oversee decision-making. They therefore need to be supportive, and even active, in involving the public in contributing to those decisions. Getting their sign-off on and/or engagement with the major components of the process will give them confidence that they are going to receive high quality evidence about the issues with which they are concerned. Establishing and growing this confidence will be one of your major objectives throughout the life of your project. Start early and keep at it.
- **Be honest and up-front about risk.** Remember to analyse not only the risk and cost of online engagement but also the risk of not engaging -- particularly the risks associated with designing policy or services without the input of the people they will affect. Also focus on your own role, and be sure senior management and your minister are comfortable about what you plan to do when managing your process.
- **Be open.** While you should be clear about your purposes, your agency should also be prepared to be led by people. Your aim is to facilitate, not control, the engagement process. Expect to be steered by people as they take on various issues -- they may want to change your starter questions, facilitate their own discussions or follow new directions. People will expect the discussion to be open-ended, so design your process to incorporate ongoing engagement, even if the main body of work on an issue needs to be completed within a specific timeframe. Go with the flow. Remember that the process of innovation is unpredictable and time consuming, but pays big dividends.
- **Plan for success.** You could end up being the victim of your own success. What will you do if you get an overwhelming public response to your online participation initiative? Have you adopted technical systems that can handle high volume traffic and have sufficient capacity to ensure moderation/facilitation during periods of intense interaction? You must ensure that the systems you have in place are rapidly scaleable.
- **Remember that people don't need government to begin engaging.** Remember to work hard to find online and offline places where people are already choosing to engage, organise and act to achieve goals you share. Find out if your agency is welcome to work alongside them. Present yourself in these online and offline spaces as one player among many equally, if not more important players, and be up front about what you are prepared to contribute. Good things to contribute include high quality

information, personal skills, ideas, contacts, recognition, and funding, if it is feasible and appropriate. Above all, be a responsible and valuable member of the community you have been allowed to join.

Designing for participation

Online participation can be seen as either an agency-centred process or a participant-centred process. The two perspectives are equally valid, but rarely made explicit. This can lead to mismatches in perceptions and subsequent disappointment -- on the part of public servants as well as members of the public. Being transparent about the scope and purpose of a specific online participation initiative will go a long way in clarifying which perspective applies and will help shape realistic expectations.

Your design should seek to build on the strengths of each approach. For example, the 'agency-centred' approach offers many robust tools for ensuring the quality and efficiency of processes and ensuring tangible outcomes within the short term. The 'participant-centred' approach provides sound reasons for including equal attention to participants' needs, the quality of the relationships built and the longer term effects. User centred design (UCD) is a cornerstone of online participation.

Table 1 Two views of online participation compared: agency-centred and participant-centred

	Agency-centred	Participant-centred
Focus	Consulter's needs	Participants' needs
Citizens' role	Sources of information	Partners in problem solving
Values	Efficiency, effectiveness, accountability	Experience, relationships, authenticity
Purpose	Aggregating preferences	Shaping preferences
Timescale	Short term	Long term

Source: adapted from G. Honor Fagan et al (2006) pp. 37-47 (See full article http://www.e-consultation.org/files/ecrp_report.pdf)

However you draw on these approaches, remember your task is to create a social setting that prompts reflection, fosters constructive and creative discussion and leads to action. Below are suggestions for designing your project's process and content.

Process

- **Design your process together with those you seek to engage.** What are their priorities? What will inspire their interest in your process? What support do they need to get involved? Build relationships with people, and test your ideas with your target audience. Build on their responses. Involving management, ministers, participants and others in an iterative approach to design will help improve the odds of a good process once you launch.
- **Include those who are most affected.** Your process should at least include people affected by your issue. Consider, though, that those who are not directly affected may also hold valuable opinions and information on a given issue.

- **Decide how many is enough.** Large numbers of participants are impressive and help build a more representative picture of public opinion. But, subject to any applicable common law or statutory consultation obligations, they are not a necessary condition for a successful engagement process. Small groups with a few good ideas are very valuable and do not demand as many resources to manage. Follow good practice with regard to quantitative and qualitative research parameters (e.g. sample size, balance between men and women, different ethnicities, etc.).
- **Design for transparency.** It's important to be clear about what you're doing and why. Transparency will help manage people's expectations about what will happen in your process, should they invest their time and effort in getting involved. Being able to map their participation onto the overall decision-making process will give people a sense of what they can and can't affect. You should be able to provide that map.
- **Maximise value for participants.** As well as knowing where they stand in relation to the decision-making process, people will be looking for inspiration, learning, discovery and action from your process. They will prefer the tangible over the intangible in terms of results. Try and give them as many of these things as you can. The design of your process should help participants sense that they have reached goals or overcome challenges. Create opportunities for people to master subject areas or tasks. For example, imagine engaging people not just with discussions but with games that put them in the role of an elected representative. Present them with the choices. What would they do if they were in the Minister's place? What do they have to know to make good choices? And once they do make a decision, what might be the consequences?
- **Do your homework.** There are various models for engaging people in collective discussions to improve public policy development or service design. You can find a good overview at the Ministry of Social Development's Good Practice Participate website (<http://www.goodpracticeparticipate.govt.nz/>), in this pamphlet by the United Kingdom organisation, Involve, People and Participation (<http://www.involve.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.viewSection&intSectionID=400>), or the UK Power Inquiry Report *Beyond the Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations From Around the World* (<http://www.makeitanissue.org.uk/Beyond%20the%20Ballot.pdf>), by Dr Graham Smith. The International Association for Public Participation has developed a toolbox (<http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/toolbox.pdf>) that is likely to be helpful at all stages of your process. Also relevant is Dr Phil Driver's Open Strategy System (<http://openstrategies.co.uk/how.php>), which addresses how to turn offline and online collaboration into results.
- **Integrate online and traditional channels.** Online tools are well-positioned to support or extend discussion beyond time or geographically limited face-to-face meetings or hui. Mixing face-to-face and online techniques will help you connect with people on their terms and in a way that best suits them. A busy professional, a stay-at-home parent, or a person who just does not like speaking in public might happily engage online, but never come to a public meeting. You may also need to consider the possibility that participants may wish to make submissions or comments on a confidential basis.
- **Check you are in compliance.** Consider the extent to which a given online engagement process could generate administrative law implications related to

consultation obligations or (other) legitimate expectations about administrative procedures. Published by the Crown Law Office, *The Judge Over Your Shoulder* (2005) (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/images/5/5c/Judge_over_Your_Shoulder.pdf), is an excellent plain language guide to the general administrative law obligations and practical matters that apply to those exercising statutory and other public law powers and functions. Be sure to comply with relevant legislation and policy frameworks, such as the:

- Official Information Act
(<http://www.ombudsmen.govt.nz/internal.asp?cat=100095>)
 - Privacy Act
(<http://www.privacy.org.nz/privacy-act/>)
 - Human Rights Act
(<http://www.hrc.co.nz/index.php?p=308>)
 - Code of Conduct for the State Services
(<http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?docid=5976>)
 - Policy framework for New Zealand Government-held information
(<http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?docid=4880>)
 - Statement of Government Intentions for an Improved Community-Government Relationship
(<http://www.ocvs.govt.nz/about/government-intentions.html>)
 - Government Web Standards
(<http://www.e.govt.nz/standards/web-guidelines/web-standards-v1.0>)
- **Consider evaluation early on.** Building evaluation into your process will help you understand how well you are doing and report effectively to senior management, Ministers, participants and other stakeholders as you progress.
 - **Provide signposts.** In designing your process, provide clear indications of how participants can express any complaints they may have about the participation process itself.

Content

Explore your options and exploit online opportunities. Conventional consultation usually sees the production of a discussion or options paper as a way of informing responses from the public. But most government discussion papers are not engaging. They are a product of a paper-based world. Electronic formats and the Internet now offer a vastly more interactive approach to informing people about issues and gathering their responses. So what are you going to do? Produce documentaries? Create video games? Start a wiki? All or some of the above, but only if the conversation and your target audience are best served by audio/visual interactive mediums.

- **Harness interactivity.** There are any number of ways to take advantage of the Web's interactivity. One step would be to take a regular discussion paper and allow comments to be appended to each section, similar to how a weblog allows comments to be appended at the end of each post (see <http://www.commentonthis.com/idaction> for a useful example). Alternatively, create a 'workbook' where people absorb concise and neatly chunked information and answer questions that apply specifically to that section (see the results of a workbook used by Health Canada at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/branch-dirgen/hpfb-dgpsa/public-rev-exam/cons-resul_e.html). The workbook approach is also nice in that it works just as well offline in paper format as it does

online in HTML. Or start from scratch and do primary research using an online questionnaire and generating a discussion paper based on participants' responses. Think also of possibilities for mobile phones and online gaming as interactive tools.

- **Know your medium.** Your content needs to be closely tied to the communication platform you choose to support it. Different media (such as public meetings, print, websites, discussion boards, blogs, wikis, videos, podcasts, SMS) bring different expectations about tone, style and interactivity. When you are developing content to support and promote your project, keep these in mind and adjust your project's timing, resource requirements and personnel competencies as needed. If you are new to using a particular medium, such as video or mobile, give yourself plenty of time to experiment and trial different approaches to ensure you are comfortable with a particular medium and that it meets your audience's needs.
- **Quality not quantity.** Be aware that producing good content demands *a lot* of effort to frame the issues in a way that will provoke thoughtful responses from people. At a minimum, content should be:
 - factual
 - focused on policy dilemmas and balanced in its treatment of competing views
 - provocative insofar as it raises key questions for discussion
 - educational
 - readable -- written in plain language, at appropriate reading levels and in multiple languages, if non-English speakers are part of your target audience
 - easily digested -- not long
 - entertaining -- make use of story-telling and narrative devices to engage readers
 - worth talking about.
- **Ensure quality control.** A process for producing good material to support online participation is likely to include:
 - literature reviews and environmental scanning of academic and news sources
 - interviews with experts or stakeholders
 - roadtesting of draft content with a small sample of experts and non-experts
 - consistent revisions in light of feedback.

Generate discussion

People need something to talk about. You have prepared your ground by developing good questions that people care about and can understand. You've also provided information to help support and inform their responses. Consider the following when launching your online discussion.

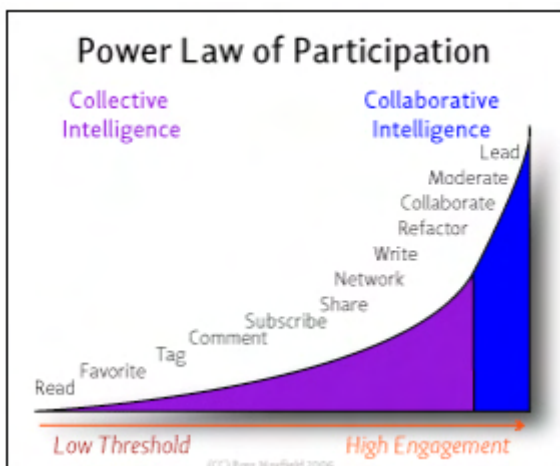
- **Find people.** Recruiting participants for your project will happen through a mix of network tapping, advertising, media presence, or through the help of a research company which may do random recruitment on your behalf. You may also make use of 'touchpoints' where the public encounters your agency. For example, freephone 0800 numbers, email signatures, voicemail and service offices can all be used to get the word out about your process.
- **Encourage multimedia expression.** Don't just expect people to respond with essays. They are more likely to provide stories and anecdotes based on their experiences. Multimedia allows people to share these in different ways. So think about how to encourage people to tell stories in the medium of their choice -- video, SMS, text, print,

photos, paintings, drawings -- while being careful to ensure information is accessible for people with disabilities or narrow bandwidth.

- **Make it easy.** Make the barriers to contributing to the conversation as low as possible. Design your website with ease of use and accessibility in mind, so that each click can be of value.
- **Connect people.** People will be interested in the content you have produced to introduce them to the subject matter if it's done well. But they will be even more interested in the ideas they produce or discover themselves as they respond. Find interesting and imaginative ways to connect people, unlock their creativity and share what they know, think or feel with others. Point out participants who are saying similar things, different things, outrageous things that might be of interest. Use the technology to produce information that will help lead people to discovery.
- **Remember the 1 percent rule.** In most online environments, typically just 1 percent of users will contribute 90 percent of your content. About 10-20 percent will contribute occasionally. The rest will watch, and contribute if you make it easy for them. Bear in mind that:
 - 'lurkers' are the bulk of the iceberg and are not to be discounted or dismissed -- they can bring ideas they see online into the offline world. Work hard to engage them in ways that work best for them
 - the engaged 1 percent are your most passionate participants. Because of their passion, they are leaders and can help engage others. But be sure that they distinguish themselves with the merit of their ideas and the efforts they apply to building the strength of the community -- not their ability to generate noise. Your strategy as host, therefore, is to set a tone of radical meritocracy. Your participants are the frontline arbiters of merit. You are a second order arbiter as the person who summarises 'key points'. The third (and final) arbiters are decision-makers, who make the final judgement about what evidence impacts their choice.

Ross Mayfield has produced the following useful graph describing the spectrum of contributions that are possible online.

Diagram 3: Law of Participation



- **Get decision makers online.** Decision makers should also be encouraged to review and participate in online discussions themselves. There is nothing like firsthand experience

of a discussion to create appreciation of its nuances and significance. This will also reinforce participants' sense that they are part of a significant discussion.

Present results

If you've chosen well, your discussion should have produced lots of ideas. You now need to do the following.

- **Summarise and share your findings.** Participation processes tend to turn out *a lot* of data. You need to be accurate, fair and complete in presenting what people have told you. At the same time, navigating volumes of raw data can be very difficult. Your virtuous efforts to ensure transparency could actually obfuscate findings if your data is too hard to work through. Making sense of what you have heard will mean:
 - making your data more navigable and organised by employing data visualisation tools or by encouraging participants to organise their contributions with user-generated metadata (such as tags) from the outset
 - for unstructured data, there is nothing to do but sit down, start reading/listening/watching, and begin writing summaries. Try to capture the tone of the debate, as much as possible, and various points of contention. Reflect the trade-offs people faced, the arguments from various sides and what sort of consensus was reached, if any. Where possible, use actual quotations from people. This will help participants see their impact on the process and make for more compelling reading
 - showing summaries to participants for their approval. Encourage them to focus on actionable outputs from the process. Your summaries should faithfully reflect the discussion, but also meet the needs of senior management and ministers who will use them, as part of their wider evidence base, to help them make their decisions.
- **Present reviewed findings to senior management and Ministers for their decision.** Make sure decision makers focus on the results of online participation:
 - the report reviewed by your participants should be identical to the one presented to senior management and Ministers when reporting on the results of consultation and preparing Cabinet and Cabinet committee papers.
 - you may also need to add some confidential analysis of proposals that come out of your process. Explain to participants the need for confidential ministerial advice in advance -- it should be part of the map you provide for participants about the decision making process. Inform them of the sort of considerations you will have in advising Ministers (in fact, these should be included in your basic questions to participants), and allow participants to work to or reject these considerations as they see fit.
- **Give participants timely feedback on decisions taken.** Closing the feedback loop is one of the most important stages in online participation processes, but is often overlooked:
 - in reporting back, policy announcements are good, launching a new programme or service is better. People always appreciate the tangible over the intangible
 - allow people to voice disagreement with the decision if they feel it's deserved. But ministers should be confident in their role as elected decision-makers and their reasons for a decision, and be prepared to explain why -- given limited resources or in the light of other options -- they chose one route over another
 - experience with online participation to date shows that people accept not getting everything they want, provided no one has led them to expect that they will.

- **Look for opportunities to continue the conversation.** In complex policy and service areas there is always room for more discussion. Consider forming an ongoing relationship with your community by:
 - making the online community a part of your regular processes -- float ideas, ask questions of each other in the normal course of business. The network that forms is likely to be an excellent source of grassroots expertise and will continue to be an asset to future policy advice or programmes
 - enlisting your passionate users. Some of your most active contributors may also be excellent supporters and implementors of the results. If they are willing, encourage them to spread the word about the results of your process. Or ask them to help the new policy or service to hit the ground running.

Links

- *The Judge Over Your Shoulder* (2005).
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/images/5/5c/Judge_over_Your_Shoulder.pdf
- Best Practice Guidelines for Departments Responsible for Regulatory Processes with Significant Commercial Implications] (December 2004).
http://www.ssc.govt.nz/upload/downloadable_files/Best_Practice_Guidelines_for_Regulatory_Processes.pdf
- Legislation Advisory Committee Guidelines: Guidelines on Process and Content of Legislation (2001 with subsequent amendments).
(http://www.justice.govt.nz/lac/pubs/2001/legislative_guide_2000/combined-guidelines-2007v1.pdf)

Case studies

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

- All of Government Portal Participation Page Case Study
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/All_of_Government_Portal_Participation_Page_Case_Study
- Ministry of Economic Development's www.businessconsultation.govt.nz Case Study
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/MED%27s_www.businessconsultation.govt.nz_Case_Study
- The Beehive Website Case Study
http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/The_Beehive_Website_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

- 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

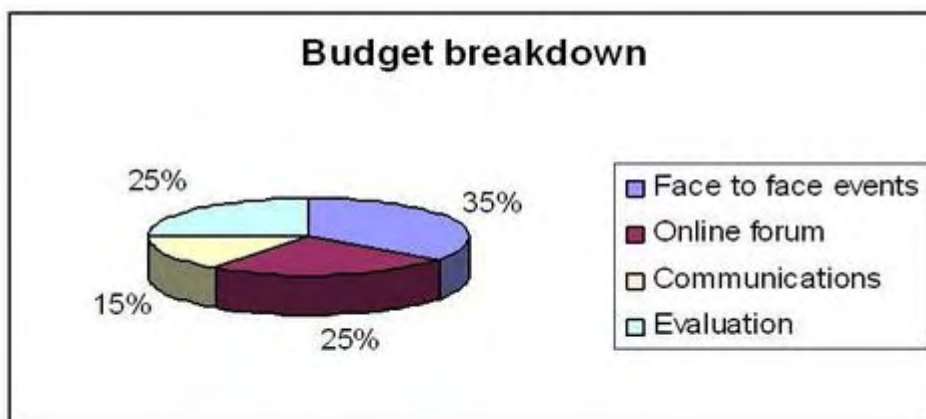
What does engagement cost? This example of an itemised budget template reflects a two-stage public engagement exercise involving both online and face-to-face channels for deliberation. The total cost of this two-stage exercise is estimated to be approximately NZ\$300,000 (as at time of publication in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

Snapshot

Voices

"The richness comes from the interaction between online and offline. So how do we use the ICT to enrich the experience of public participation?" -- Workshop participant

Quote

"Building systematic evaluations into e-democracy program development provides a process for establishing a much-needed knowledge base about what works and what doesn't work and under what circumstances in this rapidly evolving field." --- Queensland's E-democracy evaluation framework, 2005, p. 4 (http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/documents/word/eval_framework_summaryfinal_200506.doc)

Key messages

- Evaluate to learn and improve online participation.
- Evaluate against the principles for online participation set out in this Guide.
- Consider participatory evaluation whenever possible.

Highlights

- Why evaluate? Evaluating online participation is too often an afterthought or left out altogether. But it is the only way to understand what works best, learn from past mistakes and improve the application and experience of online participation.
- How to use this evaluation framework: Build considerations of evaluation in from the outset, embed evaluation in the process and consider this section as a tool for self-assessment.
- Evaluation as learning: The theory and practice of online participation is still in its infancy. As a result, the purpose of evaluation is to learn -- rather than to assess or audit.
- Evaluation against what? This evaluation framework takes as its basis the set of principles for online participation set out at the beginning of this guide.
- Moving from principles to indicators: For each of the seven principles we propose a set of indicators, measures and sources of data, which you can adapt to suit your own initiative.
- Why choose participatory evaluation? People usually participate in evaluation by answering questions. But their role could be far wider and more active -- both upstream, in formulating criteria for success and developing pertinent evaluation questions, and downstream, in analysing evaluation results. This is participatory evaluation.

- Learning to evaluate online participation: We are all novices when it comes to evaluating online participation. Given the steep learning curve ahead, we can build our competence and capacity faster if we pool our knowledge. Share your evaluation findings with others.
- Tips for evaluating online participation: A quick 'to do' list for anyone planning to engage online.
- Some examples: So where do you start? By looking at what others have done. Check out existing evaluation frameworks for such tools as e-petitions, online consultation, webcasting and wikis.

Full story

Why evaluate?

Evaluation is too often an afterthought, or left out altogether. Unwittingly perhaps, proponents and detractors of public participation conspire to maintain the current 'evaluation gap' -- albeit with different ends. Given the lack of benchmarks against which to measure the costs and benefits of this emerging field of practice, proponents are loathe to lay bare the real costs of participation as they are unsure what counts as too much or not enough. They are also unsure how to account for the tangible and intangible benefits of public participation. Detractors benefit from the lack of hard data on either costs or benefits as it allows them to vociferously maintain that whatever *is* spent, is certainly *misspent*.

In the end, it is the public that pays twice over -- first, as taxpayers funding government's efforts to inform and engage with them; second, as participants who have to make do with poorly planned and executed public participation initiatives. As public servants we owe them a better deal.

Evaluation will allow us to identify what works best, learn from past mistakes and improve the application and experience of online participation.

How to use this evaluation framework

What does successful online participation look like? Do we need to evaluate process, outcomes or both? Who defines success and who measures it? We need to find answers to these questions if online participation is to benefit New Zealanders today and in the future.

The evaluation framework we offer here can be used for a variety of purposes. For example, you can use it to assess:

- whether specific online participation initiatives have met their stated **objectives**
- the extent to which the **principles** for online participation have been adhered to
- whether online participation provides a **cost effective** approach
- how online participation can best be **integrated** with 'offline' participation
- ways of improving the **practice** of online participation.

Above all, this section invites you to build considerations of evaluation in from the outset and embed evaluation in the proces, and to consider what follows as a tool for self-assessment.

Evaluation as learning

"If public engagement in policy making is a recent phenomenon and evaluation is itself a relatively young discipline, then it may safely be said that the evaluation of public participation is still very much in its infancy." -- OECD 2005, p. 11

<http://213.253.134.43/oced/pdfs/browseit/4205101E.PDF>

There are many ways to evaluate. So, the first step is to choose an approach that is appropriate for online participation. Broadly speaking, evaluation can be conducted for the purposes of **audit** (to exercise control), **management** (to support decisions) and **learning** (to foster greater understanding and better practice). Given that the theory and practice of online participation is still in the early stages of development, an evaluation approach that maximises learning is more appropriate than one aimed at audit or management.

The next step is to decide who evaluates. Will the main role be played by an independent evaluator, an in-house evaluator or by participants themselves? These choices also influence the extent to which evaluation contributes to learning within an agency. Successful evaluation will assess online participation from the perspective of the agency, the participants and, where relevant, third parties who have a stake in the process or outcomes.

Several approaches to evaluation are available and they can all be applied to online participation. Goal-bound evaluation will measure the extent to which predefined objectives have been met. In a goal-free evaluation the evaluator will not be told what the programme objectives are but will focus solely on measuring the actual effects. Goal-free evaluation is, in Michael Scriven's (1974) words, "oriented towards final results, not original rhetoric". One of the advantages of this approach is that it can capture the unwanted side-effects as well as the unintended benefits of a given initiative. The main disadvantage is that it is generally more resource and time intensive.

Finally, a key question to consider is what will count as 'evidence' in an evaluation? There are two main ways of answering this question. We could choose to focus only on what can objectively be known ('just the facts'). Or we could focus only on what participants say they mean ('it's all relative') (see Guba and Lincoln, 1989). But there may also be a third way which combines the strengths of both. Deliberative democratic evaluation, as proposed by Ernest House and Kenneth Howe (1999), recognises that people need an opportunity to make their values and perspectives explicit in the course of an evaluation, but also requires 'proof' or reason to play an important role. By embedding deliberation into the process of evaluation we allow people to express themselves in their own words. But we also open their statements up to scrutiny and challenge by others in the course of open debate.

Choosing an appropriate model for evaluation involves answering six basic questions. The approach to online participation proposed here answers these questions in the following way.

1.	Why evaluate online participation?	The primary purpose of evaluating online participation is for learning .
2.	When should we evaluate online participation?	Evaluation should start early on and continue throughout.
3.	How will we know what	Evaluation will encompass facts, values and perspectives

	counts as evidence?	of all relevant stakeholders (including non-participants).
4.	Who does the evaluation?	Participatory evaluation will be the default position subject to feasibility.
5.	What aspects of online participation are we evaluating?	All three components of online information, consultation and participation will be subject to evaluation.
6.	Which level are we pitching our evaluation at?	The main focus will be on the programme level (ie evaluation of online initiatives) rather than on evaluating specific ICT tools.

The answers to these six questions each have implications for practice which can be expanded upon further.

Evaluation against what?

There is no 'off-the-shelf', 'one-size-fits-all' evaluation template which will fit every circumstance. This is the bad news. But the good news is that many benchmarks are available. We could evaluate online participation against the following benchmarks.

- **Traditional participation methods** This makes sense if we are trying to decide whether online avenues represent a significant 'value-added' compared with more established offline practices. However, this is only possible when both avenues exist and are equivalent (e.g. online petitions versus traditional petitions). It's of little help when online participation opens up entirely novel methods for participation (e.g. wikis, mashups) which have no offline counterparts.
- **Stated objectives** A given online participation initiative can be evaluated against what it set out to achieve. This may require a significant investment in evaluation design (i.e. reinventing the wheel). It also has the drawback of not allowing you to make comparisons across initiatives (i.e. it doesn't allow for cumulative learning).
- **Principles** Several countries, intergovernmental organisations and associations have developed principles for public participation (see links below). Principles provide a solid foundation for developing specific evaluation questions. They also provide a common framework for comparative analysis and collective learning based on accumulated evaluation results.

The evaluation framework we propose here is based on the set of seven principles outlined at the beginning of this Guide. For each principle, it develops a set of indicators and measures which you can adapt to suit specific initiatives. Taken together, the set of principles provide a basis for evaluating both the process and the outcomes of online participation.

Diagram: Using principles to evaluate online participation



We suggested earlier in this Guide that the strengths of both 'administrative' and 'democratic' perspectives on online participation can be combined to good effect (see Designing for participation section). The implication for evaluation is that you should measure the success of each online participation initiative against its own (immediate) goals as well as evaluate how well it supports the wider democratic system (long term). By evaluating specific online participation initiatives against the set of principles outlined at the beginning of this Guide, we can do justice to both perspectives.

“... a single consultation should not only be evaluated as a problem-solving exercise (i.e. administrative efficacy), but also in how it helps or hinders longer-term democratic processes” -- G. Honor Fagan et al (2006) p. 44

Moving from principles to indicators

At its most basic, designing an evaluation means thinking about the following three questions.

- **What do we want to know?** Answering this will allow us to develop meaningful evaluation questions.
- **What type of information will be most relevant?** We need to decide how our evaluation questions could be answered.
- **How will we capture this information?** Data that can't be collected is of no practical use -- we need a reality check.

Indicators and measures can be developed for each of the seven principles set out earlier in this Guide. This section will help you to construct an appropriate evaluation plan for your online participation initiative and suggests where you might find data for each indicator.

Clarity

Be clear. Be open and transparent about the objectives, limits, resources and potential impacts of online participation.

Indicators	Measures	Sources
Goals, scope, available time and resources stated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project goals, overview and timetable published online and offline 	Document review
Relevant information provided and plain language ensured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information sources available and signposted Information is accessible and understandable 	Document review and user survey
Respective roles and obligations are stated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms and conditions provided Role of all stakeholders (people, elected representatives, public servants) explained Avenues for complaints and appeals specified 	Document review and user survey
Online tools are designed to be easily used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> User perspectives inform the design of online participation tools and interfaces 	Web statistics (e.g. on usage rate), user survey, survey of non-users and key informant interview

Respect

Demonstrate respect. Demonstrate respect for the contributions, perspectives, values and prerogatives of people, stakeholders, elected representatives and public servants.

Indicators	Measures	Sources
Diversity is acknowledged and valued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts made to solicit participation from a range of stakeholders Multilingual information and summaries available 	Document review and key informant interview
People can choose how they participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of online and traditional channels available Back office integration of multiple input avenues ensured 	Document review and key informant interview
People's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obligations to provide feedback are 	Operations statistics, key

contributions are acknowledged	clearly stated and adhered to	informant interview and user survey
Safety and security is ensured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility, privacy and security concerns are addressed by adhering to accepted standards 	Operations statistics, document review and key informant interview

Confidence & commitment

Build confidence as a basis for commitment. Online participation is a new practice for decision-makers, people and stakeholders. Give it time, prove its worth.

Indicators	Measures	Sources
Confidence in tools and processes is justified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts are made to ensure elected representatives and chief executives are involved in online participation initiatives Best practice and professional advice informs the choice of online tools and their testing with potential users 	User survey, Member of Parliament (MP) and chief executive (CE) surveys if possible, key informant interview otherwise
Commitment is demonstrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to online participation is reflected at all levels -- from Ministers and chief executives to front line staff 	MP, CE and staff surveys if possible, key informant interview otherwise

Creativity

Be creative. New tools mean new approaches. Success hinges on innovation.

Indicators	Measures	Sources
New tools are piloted and shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All software and applications for online participation created with public funds are made publicly available in accordance with government policies 	Document review and key informant interview
New forms of collaboration are explored and tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Novel approaches to the collaborative design and promotion of online participation are recorded and subject to critical review by all stakeholders 	Operations statistics and key informant interview
Future risks and opportunities are regularly scoped	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future scoping and 'technology neutral' choices are an integral part of project management 	Document review and key informant interview

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk registers are kept for all online participation initiatives 	
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Inclusion

Be inclusive. Go to where people are. Make every effort to ensure accessibility and connect with all relevant communities, online and off.

Indicators	Measures	Sources
A broad range of people are informed and engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of diverse target groups with potential interest in the issues at stake are identified -- their needs, expectations and preferences shape the design of online participation 	Document review, key informant interview and surveys of users and non-users
Māori perspectives and voices are included and valued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content and process is designed to remove barriers and encourage online participation by Māori 	Document review and user surveys
Communities are catered for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities have been identified in terms of geography, traditional associations (such as whānau and hāpu), ethnicity, occupation or interest; advice on how best to engage with each community online has been sought from community liaison officers and from community leaders; proactive steps have been taken to inform and engage communities 	Document review, key informant interview. User survey and survey of non-users
Accessibility and multiple channels for participation are ensured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Web Standards are adhered to. Barriers to online participation are removed and alternative channels are provided 	Document review, key informant interview. User survey and survey of non-users

Accountability

Be accountable. Online participation is a multi-stakeholder process where everyone is accountable.

Indicators	Measures	Sources
Effective and efficient use is made of public resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of public funds in designing and delivering online participation is accounted for and reported 	Document review and key informant interview
People's time and attention are treated as valuable and scarce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agencies make efforts to avoid duplication and ensure all existing government-held knowledge is 	User survey, survey of non-users, document review and key

resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identified and used Agencies consider alternatives and co-ordinate their online participation initiatives to avoid 'consultation fatigue' 	informant interview
Resources donated by people are given value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People's contributions of tangible resources (e.g. time) and intangible resources (e.g. mobilisation of social networks) are accounted for The value of people's contributions is expressed in quantitative or qualitative terms and included in evaluation reports 	User survey, document review and key informant interview
All participants are accountable for their actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed terms and conditions are enforced The New Zealand Public Service Code of Conduct and other relevant guidance are adhered to by public servants 	Operations statistics and key informant interview
Content generated by online participation is stored, archived and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital content is recorded and archived according to accepted standards Official Information Act provisions apply 	Document review and key informant interview

Achievement

Make a difference. Strive for, build on and celebrate achievements in using online participation as a means for people, government, communities and businesses to achieve their goals.

Indicators	Measures	Sources
Final outcomes are influenced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas, perspectives or solutions generated by online participation are incorporated -- and identified as such -- in the options presented to relevant decision-makers (e.g. elected representatives, chief executives) 	Content analysis, MP and CE surveys if possible, key informant interview otherwise
Procedures for the design and delivery of public policy and services are adapted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online participation is integrated with traditional channels and embedded in agency decision-making procedures 	Document review and key informant interview
Greater reciprocal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agencies and people have a better 	User survey, CE and

understanding is achieved	is	understanding of their respective views, opinions, needs, constraints and aspirations	staff surveys if possible, key informant interview otherwise
People gain immediate personal benefits from participating online		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online participation is designed so participants can develop useful knowledge, skills and capacities (e.g. tutorials) 	User survey
Social capital and trust in government are both fostered		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online participation fosters communities and networks rather than reinforcing binary relations with government; agencies are recognised as valuable and trusted network players 	Social network analysis, user survey and survey of non-users

Note: The approach used here owes much to the excellent 2005 E-democracy evaluation framework

(http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/documents/word/eval_framework_summaryfinal_200506.doc), prepared by M & P Henderson & Associates Pty Ltd and commissioned by the e-Democracy Unit of the Queensland Government (Australia).

Why choose participatory evaluation?

"As citizens become more educated and want to be better informed there will be increasing pressure on public agencies to admit citizens and interest groups as co-evaluators." p. 16 4QC Conference 2006, Scientific Rapporteurs Report http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/4QC_Conference_2006

It is now commonplace to ask the people who use public services for their opinions, conduct regular opinion polls and test new ideas with focus groups. This is a good example of how people can participate in evaluation through answering questions. But their role could be far wider and more active. Both upstream, in formulating criteria for success and developing pertinent evaluation questions, and downstream, in analysing evaluation results. This is participatory evaluation.

"The participatory approach gives us reason to consider a new role for evaluation -- not as an exercise where external or internal evaluators come to the target groups and discover the truth, but as a process of mutual learning." Forss, K in OECD (2005), p. 71 OECD report on evaluating public participation http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/OECD_report_on_evaluating_public_participation

Participatory evaluation can be a valuable approach even when the subject of evaluation is a complex or highly technical piece of public policy (e.g. bioethics), service (e.g. mental health) or project (e.g. siting nuclear waste disposal). Given that the subject matter of online participation is *participation itself*, we can't ignore or dismiss the potential value of participatory evaluation outright. Worse still, a non-participatory approach to evaluation could

undermine participants' confidence in the process and put the online participation initiative we have worked so hard to design and launch at risk. Finally, participatory evaluation helps build greater understanding and capacity among participants. They can then invest this in any future public participation initiatives, whether online or off.

How to start using participatory evaluation

Online participation offers a challenging, but promising, new ground for participatory evaluation. The online medium offers many advantages over traditional settings -- for example, the ability to track discussions, automatically generate traffic data on use, conduct online surveys and display results in real time by using attractive graphics and visuals (see more on data visualisation here:

http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Guide_to_Online_Participation_%28June_2007%29/3.2_Manage/D_Manage#Technical_issues). Specifically, you could invite participants to play a more active role in the following areas.

- **Formulating questions** You could make this the role of the moderator of an online discussion group, the subject of a quick poll on your website's home page or solicit questions via email. At the very least you could invite participants to review a proposed set of evaluation questions (e.g. the SSC's invitation to members of the Community of Practice to help in evaluating the Participation wiki). You can invite participants early on in an online participation initiative to help design the evaluation by giving their views on these questions.
 - What will constitute success from your point of view? (criteria)
 - What would success look like? (indicators)
 - How will we know if we have been successful? (data)
- **Answering questions** You can, of course, ask participants to answer a brief set of evaluation questions in an online survey. But they may even take on the role of interviewer by forwarding the questions to other people they know (e.g. by including an 'email a friend' option). This form of 'viral marketing' may be especially valuable when you are seeking the views of non-participants. These could fall into two groups -- those who are online but uninterested, or those who are offline but potentially interested. You could use public recognition and reward for the most prolific participant-interviewers to encourage action, e.g. run a weekly feature on 'cyber-evaluators'.
- **Analysing the results** You can invite participants to review evaluation results by regularly providing updates, annotated research findings and direct access to the underlying raw data. Evaluation results could be subject to online discussion, ranking (e.g. for public importance) and rating (eg for personal relevance), and the initial draft evaluation report posted for comment and critique.
- **Using the results** You can publish evaluation results online, but they are only useful if they are known and acted upon. You can encourage participants to disseminate them and use them to generate discussion and debate on their own blogs, websites or discussion boards. In addition, participants could be encouraged to use the underlying data to generate their own mashups and graphics. If evaluations reveal problems, as they inevitably will, participants might be a key part of generating solutions. It is therefore essential to be clear about what happens once the evaluation report is issued and who will receive any suggestions or proposals.

"There is no such thing as a free lunch. The path to increased participation may well go over participatory evaluation, but it requires effort to master some of the jargon and some methodological skill. The key question is, how much of the methods can be used without alienating the participants." Forss, K in OECD (2005), p. 71 OECD report on evaluating public participation http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/OECD_report_on_evaluating_public_participation

- **Limits to participatory evaluation** Getting people to participate is hard enough. Getting them to focus on the quality of the participatory process and its outcomes is harder still -- especially if it is pitched as an extra step or additional time burden. Weaving evaluation into the process of getting an online participation initiative underway is your best bet. It's also essential to provide tangible support for capacity building so people feel confident in expressing their views about the quality and value created by online participation.

Learning to evaluate online participation

The theory and practice of evaluating online participation is in its infancy. Given the steep learning curve ahead, we'll build our competence more quickly if we pool our knowledge. This Guide provides a first step in this direction. But it does not take us all the way.

Improving our tools and skills for evaluating online participation calls for concerted efforts across New Zealand's public, private and community sectors to:

- collect and compare concrete experience over time (e.g. by a 'Participation Observatory')
- build professional skills and competence
- develop networks and mentoring
- design appropriate ICT tools to support evaluation.

Tips for evaluating online participation

- Given your goals, define criteria for success.
- Develop your own indicators and measures based on the seven principles.
- Identify your sources of data.
- Embed data collection in the activity.
- Leave time for data analysis.
- Consider the scope for participatory evaluation from the outset.
- Invest in communicating evaluation results.

Examples

The 2005 E-democracy evaluation framework adopted by the Queensland Government (Australia) provides concrete examples of how to approach the evaluation of e-petitions, online consultation and webcasting. An example of how to evaluate the use of a wiki is provided by the State Services Commission: Online Participation Project Case Study.

e-petitions

Queensland's E-democracy evaluation framework, 2005, p. 5

http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/documents/word/eval_framework_summaryfinal_200506.doc

online consultation

Queensland's E-democracy evaluation framework, 2005, p. 10

http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/documents/word/eval_framework_summaryfinal_200506.doc

webcasting

Queensland's E-democracy evaluation framework, 2005, p. 13

http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/documents/word/eval_framework_summaryfinal_200506.doc

wiki

State Services Commission (New Zealand) ParticipationNZ wiki

http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/State_Services_Commission:_Online_Participation_Project_Case_Study#Trialling_a_Wiki

Links

Guides to evaluation of online participation:

- E-democracy evaluation framework, Queensland, 2005, M & P Henderson & Associates Pty Ltd.
http://www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au/share_your_knowledge/documents/word/eval_framework_summaryfinal_200506.doc
- Guidelines for Community Engagement Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Western Australia, 2005 (pp. 28-29)
http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au/documents/e_engagement.pdf
- Electronic Engagement: A Guide for Public Sector Managers, Chen, P., 2007 (pp. 79-82)
<http://epress.anu.edu.au/anzsog/engage/html/frames.php>
- Promise and Problems of e-Democracy: Challenges of online citizen engagement, OECD, 2003 (pp. 73-76)
<http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4204011E.PDF>

Guides to evaluation of public participation:

- Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government, Involve, 2007
<http://www.involve.org.uk/evaluation>
- Evaluating Public Participation in Policy Making, OECD, 2005
<http://213.253.134.29/oecd/pdfs/browseit/4205101E.PDF>

Examples of evaluation of online participation

- From the Top Down: An evaluation of e-Democracy Activities initiated by Councils and Government, 2005, International Teledemocracy Centre (ITC), UK http://itc.napier.ac.uk/ITC/Documents/eDemocracy_from_the_Top_Down_ODPM_2005.pdf
- Digital Dialogues: Interim Report (December 2005-August 2006), Hansard Society and UK Department for Constitutional Affairs <http://www.digitaldialogues.org.uk/interimreport>

Case studies

For concrete examples of the evaluation issues discussed here see the set of seven 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](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](http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/State_Services_Commission:_Online_Participation_Project_Case_Study)
- SafeAs! Road safety Stakeholder Engagement Case Study [http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/SafeAs%21_Roadsafety Stakeholder Engagement Case Study](http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/SafeAs%21_Roadsafety_Stakeholder_Engagement_Case_Study)

Relevant reading

- Bouckaert, G., Loeffler E. and C. Pollitt. 2006. 'Making Quality Sustainable: Co-design, Co-decide, Co-produce, Co-evaluate', 4QC Conference 2006 Scientific Rapporteurs Report. http://www.4qconference.org/liitetiedostot/4qc_sr_report.pdf
- Guba, E.G. and Y.S. Lincoln. 1989. *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- House, E.R. and K.R. Howe. 1999. *Values in Evaluation and Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Involve. 2006. *The True Costs of Public Participation*. London: Involve. <http://www.involve.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.viewSection&intSectionID=390&intParentID=369>
- OECD. 2005. *Evaluating Public Participation in Policy making*. Paris: OECD. <http://www.oecdbookshop.org/>
- Ryan K.E. and L. DeStefano (eds.) 2000. *Evaluation as a Democratic Process: Promoting Inclusion, Dialogue, and Deliberation*. *New Directions for Evaluation*, no. 85, Spring 2000.
- Scriven M. 1974. "Evaluation Perspectives and Procedures: A Publication of the American Evaluation Association" in W. James Popham (ed.) *Evaluation in Education: Current Applications*. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

5. Resources

Want more? Need help? Look here. This section provides tools, case studies, a glossary and links to useful resources for online participation projects.

- Tools
- Case studies
- Glossaries

Tools

Information/One-way

Tag clouds

- **Description:** Displays all tags in a visual way, representing categories with more articles as larger.
- **Example:** <http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/>
- **Function:** Provides user a view of what topics/categories are being more heavily covered than others.

RSS feeds and aggregators

- **Description:** RSS feeds are automatically updated notifiers of changes to a webpage, filed with other RSS feeds in an 'aggregator'.
- **Example:** <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/about-this-site/rss-feeds>
- **Function:** Enables efficient regular readership and notifications.

Games

- **Description:** Engages users in a fun way.
- **NZ example:** http://www.sorted.govt.nz/kids_get_started.html
- **Function:** Often serves as the most effective way to encourage learning. Can be through simulation of reality or entirely abstract.

Screencasting

- **Description:** A digital recording of computer screen output, also known as video screen capture, often containing audio narration.
- **NZ example:**
- **Function:** Useful for demonstrating how websites, software and online tools function.

Webcasting

- **Description:** the Internet equivalent of broadcasting, but cheaper, no ads, and consumed on-demand.
- **NZ example:** New Zealand Parliament Live Broadcast (<http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/Visiting/LiveBroadcast/>)
- **Function:** Distributes information conveniently in either an audio or visual way, and consumed on-demand.

Mashups

- **Description:** A combination of data from two different sources to create a new interesting source of information.
- **Example:** <http://www.theyworkforyou.co.nz>, Tourism New Zealand's Google Earth layer (http://www.gearthblog.com/blog/archives/2007/04/100_pure_new_zealand.html) , Greenpeace's windfarm mashup (<http://www.yes2wind.co.nz/maps/dynamic7.asp>) , Harcourts property mashup (<http://maps.harcourts.co.nz>).
- **Function:** Allows publicly available information to be combined in a new and interesting way.

SMS and Email alerts

- **Description:** Updates, reminders, etc targeted to specific users/consumers/citizens/individuals.
- **NZ example:** <http://www.nrc.govt.nz/civildefence/Text-message-alerts>
- **Function:** Sends message to one of the most read and fastest read channels that individuals use.

GIS info

- **Description:** Adds geospatial metadata to information.
- **NZ example:** http://www.gearthblog.com/blog/archives/2007/04/100_pure_new_zealand.html
- **Function:** Makes information spatially relevant. Allows for asset mapping.

Translators

- **Description:** Gives rudimentary translations of information into other languages.
- **Example:** Google's Language Tools (http://www.google.com/language_tools)
- **Function:** Makes information more accessible to non-English speakers.

Style/readability checkers

- **Description:** Analyses readability of information.
- **Example:** Juicy Studio Readability Test (<http://juicystudio.com/services/readability.php>) . Provides Gunning Fogg Index, Flesch Reading Ease, and Flesch Kincaid grade level scores.
- **Function:** Provides quality control for content creators.

Glossaries

- **Description:** Defines terms used.
- **Example:** Guide to Online Participation Glossary (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Guide_to_Online_Participation_%28June_2007%29/4._Resources/4.3._Glossary)
- **Function:** Makes clear the meaning of key words.

Consultation/Transaction/Two-way

SMS transactions

- **Description:** Transactions enabled over the mobile phone SMS channel.
- **NZ** **example:**
<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/auckland/transport/parking/princesst.asp>
- **Function:** Allows users/consumers/citizens/individuals the ability to complete a transaction via a mobile device.

Quick polls

- **Description:** Easy and quick way for users to submit an opinion/fact.
- **NZ example:** <http://www.business.govt.nz/>
- **Function:** Gives organisations a superficial view of what users think/feel, plus statistics.

Online surveys

- **Description:** Users can submit a batch of opinions/statistics.
- **NZ example:** <http://www.thecouch.org.nz>
- **Function:** Provides organisations with a superficial view of what users think/feel plus statistics.

Blogs

- **Description:** Regularly updated weblog, usually written from an individual's perspective. Generally encouraging comments from readers.
- **NZ example:** <http://sortme.blogspot.com/>
- **International example:** The Chief Scientist's blog at the [UK's Food Standards Agency](#).
- **Function:** Provides an informal and personal form of communication. Encourages regular readership, and discussion on perspectives.

Discussion forums

- **Description:** Individuals interact with one another.
- **NZ** **example:**
<http://www.myd.govt.nz/ayv/haveyoursay/discussionforum/discussionforum.aspx>
- **Function:** Allows individuals to express their opinions and discuss them with one another.

User/article/information rating

- **Description:** Users vote on the quality of other users/articles/information.
- **Example:** <http://www.digg.com>
- **Function:** Allows community to transparently provide feedback on users/articles/information, while also giving other users an idea of the perceived quality of users/articles/information.

Participation/All-ways

Wikis

- **Description:** Platform for the collective creation of content.
- **Example:** <http://www.wikipedia.org>
- **Function:** Allows many users to create and edit content online with instant updates.

Tagging

- **Description:** Users (sometimes administrators) enter their own relevant terms (tags) for articles and resources for their own searchability. This is fed into a larger pool of tags browsable by all users. Many sites produce tag-specific RSS feeds and even combined tag feeds.
- **Example:** <http://www.flickr.com> <http://del.icio.us>
- **Function:** Allows a bottom-up approach for categorising information.

Multi-player virtual worlds

- **Description:** Online spaces where individuals gather for business, education or fun. As broad and open-ended as the real world, only digital.
- **Example:** <http://www.secondlife.com>
- **Function:** Anything you want.

E-petitions

- **Description:** Allows individuals to draft their own petitions online and have others join in.
- **Example:** <http://www.wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay/e-petitions/>
- **Function:** Empowers individuals to mobilise interested communities, providing decision-makers with a snapshot of some public opinion.

Pledges

- **Description:** Users bypass government processes to make a contract with a large number of individuals in order to achieve their aims.
- **Example:** <http://www.pledgebank.com/>
- **Function:** Empowers individuals to make change.

Case studies

This set of case studies describes instances of current practice in New Zealand. Together they illustrate many of the principles, design and management issues covered in the Guide to Online Participation.

They can be read alone, as a set or in tandem with the overview paper, Great Feedback! Online Engagement in New Zealand (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Great_Feedback%21_Online_Engagement_in_New_Zealand), which distils the main lessons from the case studies.

Each case study is unique but they may be grouped into the following two broad categories.

How can I find out about participation?

- All of Government Portal Participation Page Case Study (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/All_of_Government_Portal_Participation_Page_Case_Study)
- Ministry of Economic Development's www.businessconsultation.govt.nz Case Study (www.businessconsultation.govt.nz)
- The Beehive Website Case Study (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/The_Beehive_Website_Case_Study)

How can I get involved?

- Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council Case Study (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Toi_te_Taiao:_the_Bioethics_Council_Case_Study)
- Families Commission: The Couch Case Study (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/Families_Commission:_The_Couch_Case_Study)
- SafeAs! Road safety Stakeholder Engagement Case Study (http://wiki.participation.e.govt.nz/wiki/SafeAs%21_Roadsafety_Stakeholder_Engagement_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)

Glossary

A

- **access** -- the technical possibility to take part in online networks; the ability to request and receive government information and services.
- **accessibility** -- relevance of information or service, readability and ease of use. Also note: a widely cited definition of accessibility coined in 2001 by Pauline Poland defines it as "ease with which one can actually make use of the possibility of consulting government information electronically" (Online consultation in GOL countries: initiatives to foster e-democracy Poland P., 2001, p. 9 (<http://www.governments-online.org/articles/18.shtml>)). Under this definition, there are seven aspects of accessibility: 1. Recognisability and localisability 2. Availability 3. Manageability 4. Affordability 5. Reliability 6. Clarity 7. Accessibility to those with disabilities.
- **active participation** -- a category of participation that refers to active engagement or relationship with the public and businesses, with opportunities to define the process and content of policy making and service design/delivery. This category includes transacting with government.
- **aggregation** -- bringing multiple content sources together into one interface or application (Source: Future Exploration Network http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/Web2_Framework.pdf).

- **API; Application Programming Interface** -- a generic term for a means by which two programs can interact at the source code level.
- **Atom** -- Atom is a way to read and write information on the web, and is considered a competitor/alternate format to RSS

B

- **blog, blogging** -- A blog (short for weblog) is a personal online journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. Blogs are defined by their format: a series of entries posted to a single page in reverse-chronological order.
- **broadband** -- broadband refers to telecommunication in which a wide band of frequencies is available to transmit information.

C

- **civil society** -- on-governmental, non-profit making organisations, networks and voluntary associations.
- **communities** -- means more than geographic communities. The term includes traditional associations such as whānau and hapū, ethnicity or occupation, and virtual communities of interest or practice. Definition provided by: Digital Strategy: Creating our Digital Future (<http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/>).
- **click paths** -- Click Paths view shows details on a per visitor basis so you can see in real-time who is on your site, what recent visitors looked at on your site and whether they made a transaction.
- **community of practice** -- A community of practice is "a diverse group of people engaged in real work over a significant period of time during which they build things, solve problems, learn and invent...in short, they evolve a practice that is highly skilled and highly creative." Robert Bauer, Ph.D., is director of strategic competency development, Xerox PARC, in Customer Inspired Innovation: Creating the Future (<http://www.ideascope.com/>)
- **consultation** -- a category of participation that refers to a two-way relationship based on consultation with feedback sought on pre-defined issues.)
- **crowdsourcing** in mid-2007 a new model entered the mainstream -- what *Wired Magazine* dubbed '**crowdsourcing**', or what author James Surowiecki has termed '**the wisdom of crowds**'. This model posits that, enabled by collaborative technology, hundreds, thousands or even millions of people can work together to develop beneficial new knowledge and products -- and even beat the experts at their own game. As proof of concept, proponents of the new model have two striking examples: open source software programming and the online 'user-generated' encyclopedia, Wikipedia.

So, is this sufficient evidence to suggest that government might adopt a crowdsourcing model to share policy development or service design with a relatively disassociated group and hope to get anything of value? Conventional wisdom says, leave it to the experts to deal with complex issues and decisions. Large groups of people are given to mob mentality, agenda-hijacking, group-think and lowest-common-denominator outputs. As the old expression goes: the camel was a horse designed by committee.

It seems clear that 'the crowd' can produce complex and useful products and services. So what does this mean for public policy development and service design? One of this Guide's core assumptions is that there may be massive gains to be made by tapping into the collective wisdom and industry of New Zealanders. There are also risks. More work and experimentation is needed.

The point here is that mass collaboration and knowledge generation is not uncharted territory. Wikipedia and open source programming have blazed a first path from which governments now have the opportunity to learn and benefit.

D

- **decision makers** -- refers to senior State servants and government ministers charged with overseeing the direction and management of the State Services.
- **digital divide** -- disparities between people arising from lack of access to electronic technologies due to any number of reasons such as skills, geographic remoteness, financial situation or disability.
- **discussion boards/forums** -- forums, on the Internet or an intranet, where users can post messages for other users to read and respond.
- **disemvowelling** -- this technique entails removing all of the vowels from words in an offensive post. When used by a moderator, the net effect is to mark the original text as deprecated, while at the same time not suppressing freedom of speech.

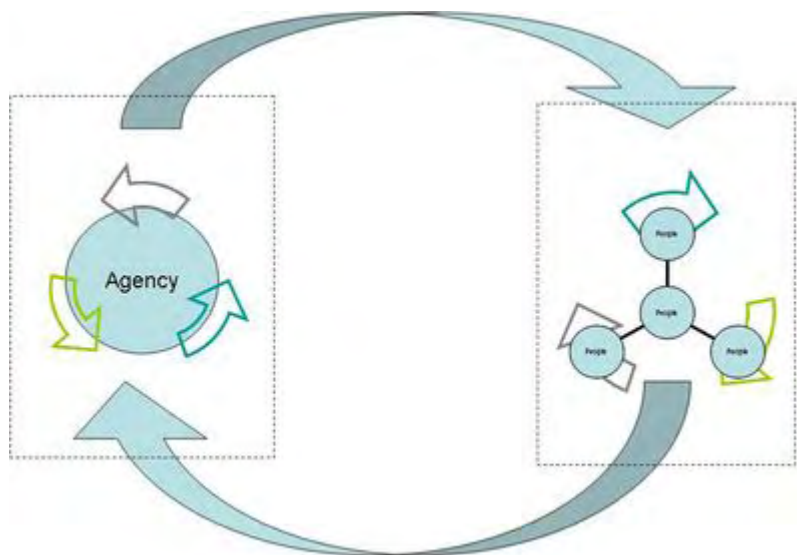
E

- **e-government** -- government agencies working together to use information and communications technology so they can better provide individuals and businesses with government services and information.
- **electronic democracy, e-democracy** -- refers to how the Internet can be used to enhance democratic processes and provide increased opportunities for individuals and communities to interact with government, and for the government to seek input from the community. It covers both **e-voting** and **e-participation**.
- **embedding** -- integrating content or an application into a Web page, while the original format is retained (Source: Future Exploration Network http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/Web2_Framework.pdf).
- **e-participation** -- see entry for electronic democracy.
- **e-petitions** -- a system for hosting electronic petitions (where “electronic” signatures are collected online and the petition is traced from its receipt to the central or local government) (Source: Wellington City Council Strategy and Policy 2006 (http://www.wellingtoncity.govt.nz/haveyoursay/meetings/committee/Strategy_and_Policy/2006/21Jun0915/pdf/04_ICT_appendix.pdf))
- **e-voting** -- see entry for electronic democracy.

F

- **facebook** -- a social networking site launched in 2004. "Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, upload an unlimited number of photos, share links and videos, and learn more about the people they meet." Source: Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>)
- **facilitation** -- provides the needed structure for meeting interactions to be effective. Facilitators use their in-depth knowledge of group processes to structure and support a meeting so that participants can focus on the substantive issues at hand. There are many definitions to draw from; a particularly useful source is Christine Hogan's "Understanding Facilitation: Theory and Principles," Chapter 5: Definitions and metaphors of facilitation, pages 49-58. In this chapter Hogan compares and critiques the definitions given in several other books. See also *The Art of Facilitation* by Dale Hunter 2007; Jenkins & Jenkins 2006, Bens 2000, 2005; Justice et al. 1999, Kaner et al. 1996, Ghais (2005), Brian Stansfield, *The Art of Focussed Conversation*, David Straus, J. Heron, *The Complete Facilitators Handbook*, and S. Priest et al., *The Essential Elements of Facilitation*.
- **feedback loops** -- commonly, *feedback* is understood as information communicated from one person in return to another, as in a conversation. When people talk about *feedback loops*, they are usually describing the construction and design of the information exchange, or the ways and means that the interaction happens. In short, feedback is what you get when you interact. Feedback loops describe how the interaction happens. These ideas of feedback and feedback loops are useful for public participation practitioners because they help to simplify and describe the following various components or 'touch-points' of a participatory process.
 - The overall process of participation can be understood as a feedback loop between citizens and government, initiated by either government or citizens.
 - Citizens in discussion with one another in government hosted spaces and in other social online settings is another, more specific, set of feedback loops.
 - The processes agencies need to undertake to respond to citizen ideas, concerns or criticisms closes the overall feedback loop.

Inviting participation in policy development and service design will require consideration of the needs of agencies and participants at every stage of the feedback loop to be effective. Looking at participation through this 'feedback lens' should help to ensure these needs are met.



- **folksonomy** -- rich categorisation of information that is collectively created by users, through tagging and other actions (cf. taxonomy) (Source: Future Exploration Network http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/Web2_Framework.pdf).

G

- **gadgets** -- typically self-contained applications that display information often pulled from a remote source. Gadgets, for example, can report the latest weather and real-time stock prices. Some also display local or system information, including laptop battery levels and "To Do" lists. Source: Ask The Security Expert: Questions & Answers (http://searchsecurity.techtarget.com/expert/KnowledgebaseAnswer/0,289625,sid14_gc_i1254478,00.html).
- **geographic information system** -- A GIS (geographic information system) enables you to envision the geographic aspects of a body of data. Basically, it lets you query or analyze a database and receive the results in the form of some kind of map. Since many kinds of data have important geographic aspects, a GIS can have many uses: weather forecasting, sales analysis, population forecasting, and land use planning, to name a few. Source: <http://www.whatis.com>
- **geographic information system (GIS) mashups** -- combining data from multiple sources is central to GIS applications

I

- **IAP2** -- the International Association for Public Participation IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (<http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/spectrum.pdf>) developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is widely cited. It overlaps with the [OECD](#) typology (see below) but goes beyond to cover five stages: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower.

The following image is sourced from : <http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/spectrum.pdf>

IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum
 Developed by the International Association for Public Participation

INCREASING LEVEL OF PUBLIC IMPACT

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Public Participation Goal: To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Public Participation Goal: To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Public Participation Goal: To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Public Participation Goal: To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Public Participation Goal: To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed.	Promise to the Public: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	Promise to the Public: We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	Promise to the Public: We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	Promise to the Public: We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fact sheets ● Web sites ● Open houses 	Example Techniques to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public comment ● Focus groups ● Surveys ● Public meetings 	Example Techniques to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshops ● Deliberate polling 	Example Techniques to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen Advisory Committees ● Consensus-building ● Participatory decision-making 	Example Techniques to Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Citizen juries ● Ballots ● Delegated decisions

- **ICT** -- information and communication technologies, an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning.
- **infomediary** -- information intermediaries who act as the link for information and transactions between people and government. Examples include libraries, Citizens Advice Bureaux and community leaders.
- **information**-- access to information is a precondition for effective public participation. Information must be relevant and of sufficient quantity and quality to enable people to make informed decisions when interacting with government.
- **information as a public resource** -- governments are strongholds of information on a wide range of issues of interest to an even wider array of stakeholders. For now, government produces information services, such as those related to business, conservation, health and parliamentary business for the general population.

However, sometimes this information does not meet the needs of particular niche interests which may benefit significantly from data structured to provide insight into what they do. Imagine portals that surface information about incidences of crop

infections for farmers in Wairarapa; or information for small business owners with interests in kiwi export packaging; or information for people wanting to know how their Member of Parliament has voted on an issue that matters to them.

Structuring data using what is known as 'metadata'.

Moreover, people do not necessarily need government to do the sorting and tailoring of information for them. Data interfaces known as APIs (Application Programming Interfaces, also known as widgets or gadgets) allow people to 'mashup' government information on their own initiative to meet their own needs.

Examples of this approach are already emerging in New Zealand. Theyworkforyou.co.nz pulls information about voting habits, interests and speeches of Members of Parliament from the official record of Parliament, Hansard. The site was produced by an expat kiwi computer programmer named Rob McKinnon, coding on his own time. Tourism New Zealand is in collaboration with Google to add a tourist information 'layer' to its popular Google Earth program -- this means Google Earth users from around the world will now have detailed information about things to do and places to see in New Zealand at their fingertips.

Structuring and repurposing government information opens up a wide and powerful new avenue for online participation. Its economic and social benefits could be immense once government is able to open up its information holdings to the public; and New Zealanders are confident in shifting, remixing and repurposing the data at hand.

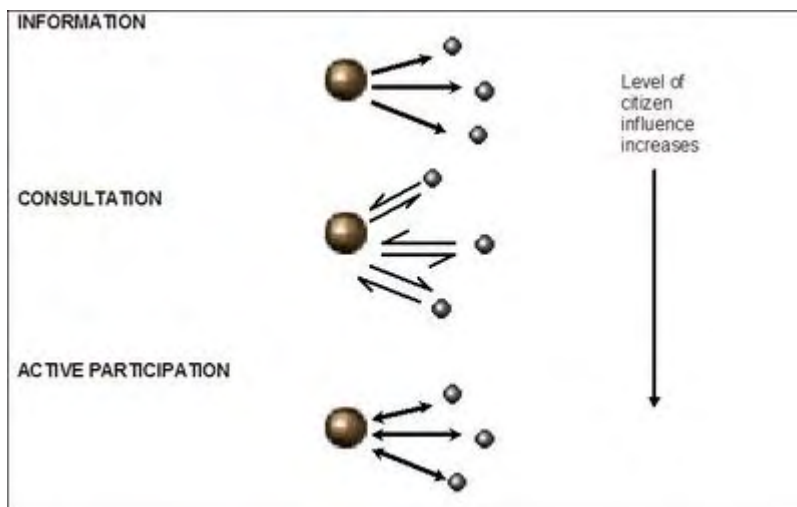
M

- **mashups** -- a combination of different types of content or data, usually from different sources, to create something new. (Source: Future Exploration Network http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/Web2_Framework.pdf).
- **metadata** -- metadata is essentially data about data, (e.g. this piece of website code indicates a place name in the site's text, this piece of website code indicates an image of a person displayed on the site, this piece of website code indicates the beginning of a text of a speech, etc), can help sort information into chunks that government and people can find, use, remix and reformat into something they find useful.
- **microformats** -- A microformat is a type of open source data format built upon existing and widely adopted frameworks like Extensible Markup Language (XML)
- **mind map** -- A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks or other items linked to and arranged radially around a central key word or idea. It is used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organization, problem solving, decision making, and writing. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_Mapping
- **multi-touch input screen** -- overlays which have the ability to display and receive information on the same screen. The effect of such overlays allows a display to be used as an input device, removing the keyboard and/or the mouse as the primary input device

for interacting with the display's content. Such displays can be attached to computers or, as terminals, to networks. Source; [Wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org). See : YouTube 'Crazy Multi Input Touch Screen' (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zp-y3ZNaCqs>)

O

- **online consultation** -- in this context, online consultation refers to an exchange between government and people using the Internet. It involves using the Internet to ask a group of people their opinion on one or more specific topics.
- **online participation** -- the use of information and communication technologies to support public participation with government. The scope of online participation in this Guide does not include electronic voting (e-voting) in elections which is under the responsibility of the Chief Electoral Office.
- **online workbook** -- a workbook with entries made electronically by the participants.
- **OECD** -- acronym for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. An OECD report published in 2001 defines information, consultation and active participation in terms of the nature and direction of the relationship between government and citizens. The report offers the following simple functional typology.
 - **Information:** a **one-way relation** in which government produces and delivers information for use by citizens. It covers both 'passive' access to information upon demand by citizens and 'active' measures by government to disseminate information to citizens.
 - **Consultation:** a **two-way relation** in which citizens provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition by government of the issue on which citizens' views are being sought and requires the provision of information.
 - **Active participation:** a **relation based on partnership** with government, in which citizens actively engage in defining the process and content of policy-making. It acknowledges equal standing for citizens setting the agenda, proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue -- although the responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation rests with government.



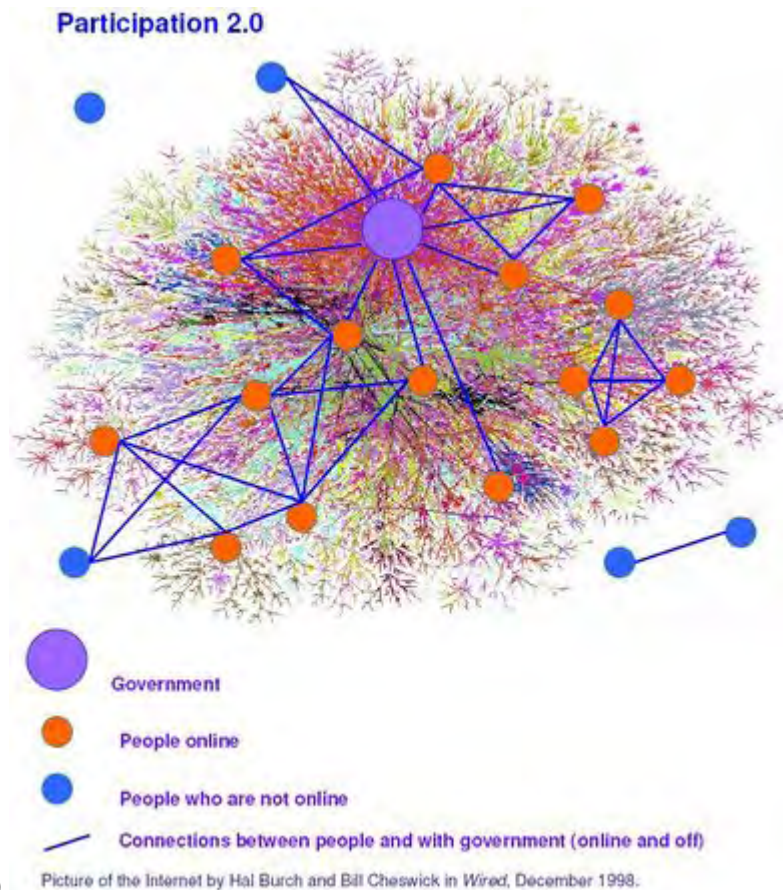
Adapted from OECD (2001), *Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy Making*, Paris: OECD, p. 23

P

- **people** -- members of the general public, usually with no formal association other than shared interests and/or activities. Successful online participation rests on people who are prepared to form relationships and work towards a common goal.
- **public participation** -- participation means more than consultation. It includes providing government information to people in ways that make it accessible and relevant, and creating opportunities for people to be actively involved in the design and delivery of government policies and services. Public participation is nothing new. Nor are efforts to describe it. Sherry R. Arnstein's seminal article proposing "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" may date from 1969, but is by no means dated. Many variations on the theme have been proposed since then. See also OECD and IAP2 definitions.
- **Participation 2.0 model** -- given what we know today about the importance of social networking (both online and offline), what is striking about the image used by the OECD 2001 report in its definition of information, consultation and active participation is its depiction of a set of isolated individuals each relating to government on a bilateral basis (see OECD glossary entry above). The image is silent about interconnected citizens, and the role of these relationships in shaping how individuals access government-held information, services and decision-making processes. It could therefore be considered a **Participation 1.0** model.

The defining feature of what many are calling "Web 2.0" is the ability of users to create, share and link content as they develop communities. We need a new visual map of these interactions -- one which takes into account not only online relations between citizens and with government but also how they relate to offline interactions. The image below attempts to portray these new interconnections, or **Participation 2.0**, as being facilitated by the Internet -- but extending beyond it.

Note that this image simply charts interconnections between the nodes and superimposes them on a picture of the Internet. It does not describe the direction, purpose or nature of the interaction which may vary widely (see below).



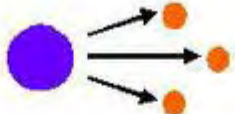
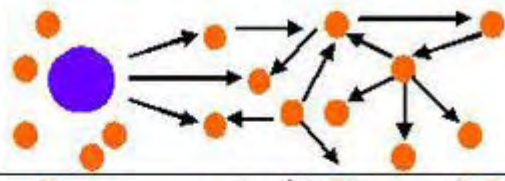

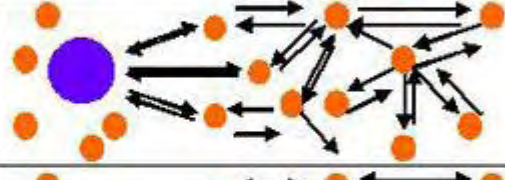

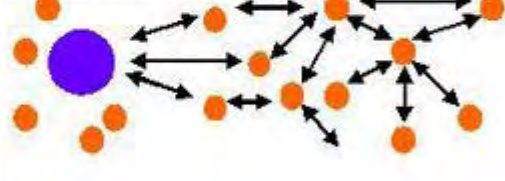
Participation 2.0

Several features of this diagram deserve comment.

- **Government is just one of the nodes in the network** -- albeit a large one which is well endowed and highly connected. It is obliged to struggle for the attention of those online, prove its relevance and add value in the same way as any other node.
- **People can be either connected to the Internet or not** -- if they are offline, they may enjoy strong connections with others who are also offline. Membership of virtual communities hardly discounts the importance of traditional communities.
- **People might be indirectly connected to Internet via others** -- who are online (e.g. granddaughters, radio journalists, frontline public service providers) who therefore provide a 'conduit' for the two-way flow of information. You don't have to be online yourself to harness the benefits of the Internet if you know, and trust, someone who is.
- **People may be highly connected online and have little or no connection with government** -- bypassing it altogether except for those moments of obligatory contact (e.g. registering births, deaths, paying taxes).
- **People will use their connections to share, compare and verify** -- before placing their trust in the information and services provided by a given node (including government).

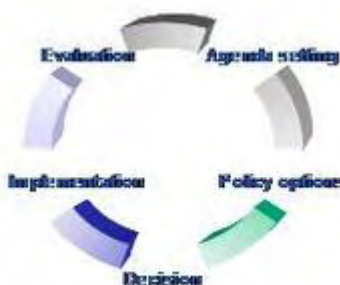
This paradigm shift from Participation 1.0 to Participation 2.0, its technical underpinnings in terms of Internet programming languages and how this impacts on the range of tools available, can be summed up as follows.

Paradigm shift: from Participation 1.0 to Participation 2.0

	Participation 1.0 model	Tools	Participation 2.0 model
Information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email alerts Websites 	
Consultation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online forms Online consultation 	
Participation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion forums Shared online workspaces 	
Internet	HTML High literacy to use	Text Photos	XML Low literacy to use

Source: adapted from OECD (2001)

- **podcast**-- an audio file which is usually made available on a website. Users can either listen to the file on their computer, or download it onto their MP3 player or other mobile device, and listen to it later.
- **policy cycle** -- descriptions of the policy cycle vary, but this guide describes it in terms of five main stages [cf. OECD, 2001 p. 21]: agenda-setting, policy preparation, decision making, implementation and evaluation.



The policy cycle may skip a stage or swing back and forth between successive stages in an iterative manner. Each stage may:

- involve different sets of actors
- impact differently upon the final outcomes
- require a different mix of tools and communication approaches.

Each stage of the policy cycle has a distinct focus. Public participation can take place at *any* stage of the policy cycle but has a different role and relative weight at each stage.

Stage	Focus	Role for public participation
agenda setting	identifying and defining a problem or a need which can be addressed by public policy	can help in defining needs, expressing aspirations, scoping issues and weighing alternatives (including doing nothing)
policy preparation	defining the risks, costs and benefits of a range of policy options	can consist of providing expert and experiential knowledge to inform policy, expressing preferences on available options
decision making	adoption of a specific policy option by ministers	consists of subjecting ministerial decisions to public scrutiny and debate
implementation	development of supporting legislation, regulations, delivery plans, and resource allocation	can help in assessing the potential impact of legislation and regulations, testing the feasibility of implementation plans and identifying resources in the community
evaluation	measuring performance against objectives	can contribute to defining criteria for success and in reviewing evaluation reports

To date, public participation has been largely confined to the **policy preparation** stage where the public may be invited to express their preferences when presented with a pre-established menu of options via public consultation. The **agenda setting** stage has, until very recently, been the least exposed to structured public participation. And yet it is precisely at this stage in the process where the "proto-policy" is most amenable to incorporating diverse perspectives that public participation can deliver the greatest benefits.

- **portal** -- a website that is intended primarily to link to other websites.
- **privacy** -- the proper handling of personal information throughout its entire lifecycle, consistent with the requirements of the New Zealand Privacy Act 1993. It can also mean the right of an individual not to be identified.
- **pseudonym** -- an arbitrary name chosen by an individual to identify themselves (e.g. a username).
- **public sector** -- The New Zealand public sector comprises: the State sector ('central government') and all local authorities ('local government'), including local authority trading enterprises (LATEs). 'Public sector' is wider than 'State sector', which is wider than 'Public Service'

- **Public Service** -- the Public Service comprises the departments listed in the First Schedule to the State Sector Act; the number has varied between 36 and 39 in the last year. Sometimes described as the first, or inner, tier of the 'three tier State', the other two tiers being Crown entities and State owned enterprises. Narrower than both 'State sector' and 'public sector'.

R

- **reports** -- reports can be text, audio or video. When issuing reports on specific engagement activities ensure that the highlights are delivered in an engaging but concise manner. Annual reports by agencies should convey relevant information in a user-friendly manner and make good use of graphics and layout. An award-winning (<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/news/display-item.php?id=2949>) example is Wellington City Council's Annual Report 2005/6 (<http://www.wellington.govt.nz/plans/annualreport/0506/pdfs/0506annualreport.pdf>).
- **RSS** -- Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a group of formats to publish (syndicate) content on the Internet so users or applications automatically receive any updates. (Source: Future Exploration Network http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/Web2_Framework.pdf)

S

- **SMS** -- The Short Message Service (SMS), often called text messaging, is a means of sending short messages to and from mobile phones. Definition from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_message_service
- **social bookmarking** -- a community—or social—approach to identify and organise information on the Web. Social bookmarking involves saving bookmarks one would normally make in a Web browser to a public Web site and "tagging" them with keywords to make it easier to remember, organize and share bookmarks. See www.commoncraft.com video and transcript plain english descriptions of social bookmarking (<http://www.commoncraft.com/bookmarking-plain-english>) and www.educause.edu PDF on social bookmarking, May 2005 (<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7001.pdf>)
- **social capital** -- attitude, spirit and willingness of people to engage in collective, civic activities. Also defined by the OECD as "...networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings which facilitate cooperation within or among groups".

http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/sarc/E-Democracy/Final_Report/Glossary.htm

- **social media** -- allow easy content creation and sharing. Blogging, social networking, image and video uploading and sharing are all elements of social media (Source: Future Exploration Network http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/Web2_Framework.pdf).
- **social networking** -- A social network is a map of the relationships between individuals, indicating the ways in which they are connected through various social familiarities ranging from casual acquaintance to close familial bonds. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org>. See: www.commoncraft.com video and transcript - a 2 minute

plain English presentation on social networking (<http://www.commoncraft.com/video-social-networking>)

- **stakeholders** -- generally refers to non-governmental organised interests with explicit agendas such as businesses, unions, community organisations or lobby groups. Sometimes refers to all the actors with a stake in successful online engagement, which includes people, decision makers and stakeholders -- as defined in the previous sentence.
- **State Services Commission** -- the State Services Commission is the Government's lead advisor on New Zealand's public management system and works with government agencies to support the delivery of quality services to New Zealanders. To achieve this, SSC has the following leadership roles:
 - overview and oversight of State Services delivery
 - steward of State Services capability
 - set standards of behaviour
 - provide guidance on systems and expectations
 - advise Ministers
 - administer policies
 - enquire and investigate
 - provide services.

T

- **tangata whenua** -- a Māori term literally meaning 'people of the land' (from tangata, 'people' and whenua, 'land'). Tangata whenua are those who descend from the first people to settle New Zealand Aotearoa.
- **tag** -- In HTML terms, a 'tag' is used for marking-up text in various ways so that it is formatted in a Web document. Also descriptions that are attached to information or content.
- **tag cloud** -- a visual depiction of tags that have been used to describe a piece of content, with higher frequency tags emphasised to help content comprehension and navigation (Source: Future Exploration Network).
- **tagging** -- attaching descriptions to information or content. (Source: Future Exploration Network).
- **technology neutral** -- the need to ensure that a range of technology options are considered, and as far as possible to avoid 'capture' by a single vendor/supplier.

U

- **user-centred design** -- any development process or methodology can incorporate a few key activities to make it more user centred. Usability activities can be implemented at different stages of the development process of services and products. Most teams would already have some of these activities as a part of their normal development methodology but may call them a different name or have a different way of conducting them. The following table illustrates some of the user-centred design (UCD) activities that can help to make your online participation channel more user-friendly.

Stage	User-centred activities
Planning	Hold stakeholder meetings, define the purpose of the service/product/system, define user groups and their needs, create personas, determine the user experience, conduct ethnographic studies, review similar sites and incorporate findings into the development strategy.
Analysis and requirements	Conduct focus groups, surveys, brainstorming, task analysis, determine the information needs and architecture, card sorting, walkthroughs, prepare story boards, conduct user observation, interviews, frontline and helpdesk research, rapid prototyping and Fagan inspection methods.
Design	Low and high fidelity prototyping (ie rough and more precise mock-ups), usability testing, questionnaires, develop content and information architecture guidelines, expert review.
Evaluation	Contextual testing, 'think out loud' protocol, explorative and scenario usability testing, post testing questionnaires for users, comparison testing.
Continuous improvement	Web log/stats analysis, content and information audits (for accuracy, timeliness and consistency), periodical usability testing, user satisfaction research, user feedback, conducting user journals/diaries, frontline and helpdesk research and analysis, testing new concepts with user focus groups.

V, W

- **Web 2.0** -- every aspect of Web 2.0 is driven by participation. Key characteristics include the use of common standards, decentralised architecture, spirit of openness, extreme modularity, importance of identity and strong user control. (Source: Future Exploration Network).
- **webcasting** -- method of streaming data and video via the Internet.
- **widget** -- small, portable Web application that can be embedded into any Web page (Source: Future Exploration Network).
- **wiki** -- a wiki is an online platform that allows users to add and edit content directly.
- **Wikipedia** -- a multilingual free-content encyclopedia on the Internet.

Open source software powers corporate servers, PC desktops, Internet browsers, wikis, weblogs, discussion forums and many other applications. They are developed not by corporates that sell their software, but hundreds of volunteer coders who use and improve 'open' (rather than proprietary) code. Their guiding principle is, 'many eyes make all bugs shallow'. Their ethos is, 'if you make improvements, make it freely available to be used by others'. They gather on websites such as <http://www.sourceforge.net>, to develop and improve software being generated all over the world by anyone able to string a line of code together.

To date, their results have been impressive, with many programs rivalling the functionality of corporate software offerings. Programs like the Internet browser Firefox have millions of users, while businesses (including those of major corporates like IBM) are making significant profits by providing services around software products like the Linux operating system.

Wikipedia works on similar principles. Anyone may edit the online encyclopedia, which now boasts approximately 1.7 million articles in English. A good Wikipedia entry will rely on verifiable, cited sources on the way to creating a 'neutral point of view' on a given subject, person or issue. Experts, amateurs and grammar mavens mix to create a knowledge base on everything from abortion, to avant-garde cinema, to New Zealand's prime ministers. A recent study (<http://www.nature.com/news/2005/051212/full/438900a.html>) by science news journal *Nature* showed that Wikipedia is about as accurate as the expert-reviewed encyclopedia, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, though *Britannica* has called *Nature's* methodology 'fatally flawed' -- a charge to which *Nature* later responded.

Of course, the site's approach is not without weaknesses. There have been many instances of vandalism, inaccuracy and even slander on Wikipedia. As a result, Wikipedia has evolved strict editorial policies that aim to catch and repair malicious contributions. Its strength lies in its community of contributors, who work independently and with one another to spot issues and develop a rough consensus on how to fix them -- often in rapid fashion. And it is not without hierarchy -- there are editors empowered to flag and/or fix inappropriate or wanting contributions. Any disputes that cannot be resolved by article contributors and editors are decided by Wikipedia's founder, Jimmy Wales.

Wherever one comes down on the authority of its contributions, Wikipedia is a phenomenon: a recent study (http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Wikipedia07.pdf) by the Pew Internet and American Life project showed that 36 percent of online American adults consult Wikipedia. Despite the ongoing controversy over its accuracy, many people use it as a starting point for their information needs.

- **Workbook**-- a 'workbook' where people absorb concise and neatly chunked information and answer questions that apply specifically to that section. The workbook approach is also nice in that it works just as well offline in paper format as it does online in HTML.

X

- **XML** -- eXtensible Markup Language is an open standard for describing data which enables easy exchange of information between applications and organisations.