



Glossary

A quick reference
for consultation
and dialogue

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A

Asynchronous – From a technical standpoint, asynchronous refers to a communication mode that does not happen simultaneously. In the context of on-line dialogue, asynchronous citizen engagement refers to an on-line dialogue between participants that occurs over a preset period of time but does not require simultaneous contribution by the group members.

B

Blog – see weblog

Citizen Engagement – Citizen engagement is about enriching the relationship between governments and citizens. It involves a mutual learning process and ultimately leads to more effective policy development.

C

Citizen engagement, a process of interaction between governments and citizens,

- ▶ increases the opportunities for citizens to talk with one another and decision makers by ensuring a two-way flow of communication among participants;
- ▶ is an open-ended process in which there are no pre-determined outcomes;
- ▶ allows for serious, substantive and deliberative discussions;
- ▶ is supported by factual, balanced information that is written in plain language and delivered in a transparent, meaningful and timely way;
- ▶ is based on mutual learning between citizens and decision makers;
- ▶ assumes that citizens add value and bring important perspectives to the policy development process.

(Source: http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=awd-prix_cit)

Communities of Interest – A grouping of users with a common interest who generate a majority of their communication with other members of the group. Each group (or community) is assumed to operate under a set of rules (membership rules) set by its convenor or moderator.

Communities of Practice – Distributed groups of people who share a concern, set of problems, mandate or sense of purpose. As (often) informal groups of experts, Communities of Practice serve to reconnect individuals with each other in self-organizing, boundary-spanning communities. Communities of Practice complement existing structures by promoting collaboration, information exchange, and sharing of best practices across boundaries of time, distance, and organizational hierarchies.



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Consultation – It is a process that facilitates the receipt of feedback and input on an issue. There are two key roles in any consultation; those requesting the input, or the host, and those providing the input, or the participant.

Key elements:

- It is a process, not an outcome.
- Consultation impacts on a decision through influence, rather than power.
- Consultation is about input into decision-making, not joint decision-making or decision-making by referendum.

Content Management System (CMS) – From a web perspective, a content management system (CMS) supports the creation, management, distribution, publishing, and discovery of information on a website. It covers the complete lifecycle of the documents or pages on a site, from providing simple tools to create the content, through to publishing, and finally to archiving. It also provides the ability to manage the structure of the site, the appearance of the published pages, and the navigation provided to the users.

D

Deliberation – Deliberation is characterized by thoughtfulness in decision-making through a thorough consideration of all sides of an issue. The common vehicles for deliberation can include dialogue, discussion, and debate.

Deliberative Dialogue – is a unification of the principles and approaches to both dialogue and deliberation. The ultimate goal is to create an open-ended process that brings people together in informed discussions around an issue or challenge. The principles of deliberation require a balance of information so that there is thoughtful consideration given to an issue. Dialogue ensures that certain ground rules are established such as emphasizing listening, and encouraging story-telling and reflection on personal experiences.

Deliberative dialogue is similar in definition to citizen-engagement, but as a principle is not only limited to citizens.



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Dialogue – Dialogue is often defined as a conversation between two or more people or an exchange of ideas or opinions. It is characterized by participants exchanging information face-to-face, sharing personal stories and experiences, honestly expressing perspectives, clarifying viewpoints, and developing solutions. The goal of dialogue is to deepen understanding and judgment, and to think about ways to make a difference on an issue. This is more likely to occur in a safe, focused discussion when people exchange views freely and consider a variety of views.

Discussion Forum – can be defined by the process and the roles. As a process it allows a participant to submit information in the form of a post on a given topic. Their post may be responded to, or in fact could be a response to another participants post. The series of posts is called a thread, with a separate thread provided for each topic.

The three key roles are the participant who makes the posts, the moderator who sets and enforces the established rules and etiquette, and the host who actually provides the infrastructure for the discussion board.

E

Email Lists – An email list is a tool that makes it easy to reach *multiple* people by sending a message to a *single* email address. This single email address is associated with a list of the email addresses of all the people subscribed to the email list. When any member of the list sends a message to the address of the mailing list, everyone on the list automatically receives the email message. Email lists also include features such as Web-based archives, tools for reviewing and managing lists of subscribers, and tools for managing invalid "bouncing" email addresses.

Engagement – see citizen engagement.

E-consultation – see on-line consultation.

E-Democracy –The adaptation and enhancement of traditional democratic processes between elected representatives and citizens, over the Internet. There is much debate on which processes should be made available in the electronic medium, although most would agree that eventually voting, petitions, consultations, and committee processes will all be on-line.

E-Government – The use of information technology to provide citizens with access to government information and services over the internet. For government this requires an examination of their current practices to see how they can be adapted or even transformed for electronic delivery.



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F

Expert Forum – An expert forum allows participants to take part in discussions, share best practices, and request advice about effective strategies and solutions with leading experts and issue gurus.

Facilitator – A facilitator is a subject matter expert responsible for leading a small group of individuals in a guided discussion about a specific topic. A facilitator, unlike an instructor, is not the source of information but one that uses the expertise found in the small group to derive the relevant information and achieve the lesson objectives. In a small group setting, the facilitator will lead the group through questions and exercises about the self-study materials and personal experiences until such time as all participants within the group are comfortable with the outcome.

G

Focus Groups – Focus groups are commonly used in market research areas to test concepts and ideas. These are not traditionally considered consultation mechanisms, but they are an effective means of gauging opinion.

Government On-line (GOL) – GOL is the Government of Canada's plan to deliver programs, services and information over the Internet, and a key component in the plan to improve service delivery to Canadians.

I

Information and Communications Technologies (ICTc) - Information Communication Technologies (ICT) is fast becoming the industry standard replacement for Information Technology (IT) and encompasses all the areas that were traditionally included in IT. This change is being propelled by the popularization of the World Wide Web and electronic mail.

Intermodal Consultation – A mixed approach to consultation and dialogue including both on-line and off-line tools and approaches that complement one another to achieve project objectives.

M

Moderator – A moderator works to keep conversations flowing. On-line moderators are responsible to help members by answering questions, making announcements, and creating a friendly, safe environment for dialogue. Moderators are privileged users who can control access to the discussion group, modify or delete posts, create summaries, and edit group options.

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O

On-line Consultation – It is a process that facilitates the receipt of feedback and input on an issue using the internet. There are two key roles in any consultation; those requesting the input, or the host, and those providing the input, or the participant.

Key elements:

- It is a process, not an outcome.
- Consultation impacts on a decision through influence, rather than power.
- Consultation is about input into decision-making, not joint decision-making or decision-making by referendum.

On-line Survey – Quite simply, an on-line survey is a survey that is administered over the Internet. The survey is created as a web page form. Users access the page with their web browser, fill in the form, and submit their answers. All results are accumulated into a single data file, which can be read with a statistical analysis tool. An on-line survey eliminates paper forms and the equipment necessary to tabulate those forms. More importantly, the data is exported in a machine-readable format, ideal for further analysis.

On-line Submission – An online submission or interactive form that allows participants to enter and send text, or documents using a form found on a web page. There are two common types of submissions that are solicited during a consultation: anecdotal and objective. Both types of submissions are important and valuable to a consultation.

On-line Workbook – The on-line workbook is similar in concept to the on-line survey however it also provides participants with information, scenarios and facts to consider before choices are made. The workbook provides a learning opportunity and allows the participant to better understand the tough decisions at hand.

P

Participatory Democracy – Citizens participate directly in the decision-making process, usually by voting. The vote is distinct from the public debate that precedes it and is the quintessential democratic act. Examples of participatory mechanisms include general elections, referendums and community-based partnerships.

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Public Consultation – Public consultation is a process involving interactive or two-way communication between a government and the public, through which both become informed about different perspectives on issues and proposals, providing the public with the opportunity to influence decisions to be made by the government. A good public consultation program will result in better decisions that are more sensitive and responsive to public concerns and values.

Public Dialogue – Public dialogue is an effort to engage people in informed deliberation. There are several best practices in regards to format and structure, but commonly this takes place in a facilitated half-day session. Participants are provided with background information to consider before their arrival, and key facts and issues are outlined before the dialogue takes place.

R

Representative Democracy – The process of allowing citizens the opportunity to select representatives to stand for them in government and act of their behalf.

Roundtables – Roundtables are similar to workshops and are a solid approach to bringing people together. A common approach is the expert roundtable where a facilitated discussion can deliver valuable input and perspective to your issue, policy or program. This is also a good forum for sharing of information and expertise.

S

Stakeholder – A stakeholder in a problem is any individual, organization (a group of people), or institution (of people), who is affected by the problem, or can affect other stakeholders or be affected by the actions of other stakeholder. A stakeholder is one who has a stake in the problem and in the actions of other stakeholders.

Secure Socket Layers (SSL) – SSL is a security protocol that enables encrypted (and therefore secure) communication to pass between a server (the website you're dealing with) and a client (your browser, i.e., you). This capability addresses fundamental concerns about the security of communication over the Internet and is used for example in on-line credit transactions and by all on-line banking institutions.

Synchronous – From a technical standpoint, synchronous refers to a communication mode that takes place simultaneously. In the context of on-line dialogue, synchronous citizen engagement refers to an on-line dialogue between participants that occurs at a preset time and does require simultaneous contribution by the group members.



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T

Town Halls – Town Halls are a popular tool in bringing citizens into contact with political leaders. The typical format for this is a question and answer format. The citizens sometimes come with prepared questions for the political leader to respond to.

W

Weblog/blog – A blog is a web page made up of usually short, frequently updated posts that are arranged chronologically—like a *What's New* page or a journal. The content and purposes of blogs varies greatly—from links and commentary about other web sites, to news about a company/person/idea, to diaries, photos, poetry, mini-essays, project updates, even fiction.

Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) – WAP is an open, global specification that empowers mobile users with wireless devices to easily access and interact with Internet content and services instantly.

Workshops – Workshops are great for tackling issues and problems and creating a direction to move forward. These are best used for teams with an established relationship when it comes to consultation. Workshops should have small enough numbers so that everyone has a voice.