



STREAM CITIES

Planning public meetings: guidelines to involve people in the project

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INTRODUCTION

Northern Africa cities face a huge urban sprawl and population growth, as well as an increasing urban poverty. Urban Strategic Planning is a methodology which supports these cities in their critical decision making process, through a specific selection of strategic challenges for the sustainable urban development and the implementation of local action plans. STREAM Cities promotes a bottom up approach that develops a strong partnership between the local authority and the local stakeholders.

More specifically, STREAM Cities project realize a strong participatory planning methodology which identifies the stakeholders and develops interactive dialogue with them through public meetings in three phases: the analysis of the local needs and potentialities, the identification of the main urban challenges to be addressed, and the development of urban action plans. This methodology encourages a suitable strategic approach to face the urban challenges in MEDA countries.

This project will also contribute to improve qualifications through the transfer of key knowledge and skills for the local public administration in order to re-produce the action in other municipalities of the same country and of the MEDA regions.

Actors involved

One of the most important part of the project is the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision making process: the biggest ones are municipal staff and target group leaders. Then we have many other social actors such as artisans, students, teachers, young women and all the people involved in the tourism services and management. The real and effective use of their feedbacks from the public meetings has to be taken into due consideration during the policy formulation.

The final beneficiaries will be: the 3 MEDA target cities (Bethlehem, El Mina, Fez) their institutional partners, their stakeholders and their entire population. Also the 3 EU cities (Catania, Reggio Emilia, Valencia) involved will benefit from the exchange, dialogue and improved awareness.

The project will address its activities to a specific target group within these municipalities:

- municipality political representatives and top management staff
- main stakeholders of urban areas: social, economic, and environmental actors, NGOs citizens and any organised association or group representing civil society

It's appropriate at this time to remind you that the main objectives of STREAM Cities project are:

1. Promoting the Urban Strategic Planning approach as a model for urban development in MEDA countries through a real involvement of all stakeholders;
2. Strengthening the role of cities and their capacity building;

3. Contributing to the socio-economic sustainable development of urban areas thanks to the assessment of the needs and opportunities of the city and its region, and to the development of a long-term vision with specific focus on results;
4. Support the identification of innovative tools and funding to implement future Urban Strategic Plans.

Expected results are:

- Improving management skills and planning abilities of the local administrators;
- Rising awareness and involvement of citizens and stakeholders on their cities urban development strategies
- Creation of the STREAM tool to make an effective participatory approach

SUMMARY

This short vademecum provides the principal communication guidelines and instruments that the city governance should successfully use to organize public meetings and to involve the main city-stakeholders and target groups that take a development part in this strategic and innovative urban plan.

The vademecum is structured in 4 chapters:

Chapter 1: 10 Communication principles

Chapter 2: Conducting a preliminary research to involve people in the project

- 1) The city context
- 2) The intent of your communication efforts
- 3) The available resources and capabilities to design and implement an involving plan

Chapter 3: To inform, to educate, to involve

- 1) Press
- 2) Paid Advertising
- 3) City Communication and Outreach Activities

Chapter 4: Public meetings: planning activities, involving people, gathering feedbacks

- 1) Planning activities
- 2) Involving people
- 3) Gathering feedbacks

Chapter 1: 10 COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

Before starting the development and the implementation of a communication plan borned to involve your main city-stakeholders, as Julie Wagner says in her communication handbook, is good to know 10 overarching communication principles to apply and use in different ways¹:

¹ From Julie Wagner, "Grands Travaux Handbook", Draft - April 2004

1. Conduct a preliminary assessment to effectively tailor your communication and outreach strategy. A common mistake is to assume that all projects are similar enough to allow for “cookie cutter” communication strategies. Instead, creating an effective strategy first means understanding the realities specific to your STREAM Cities project. This requires an understanding of political expectations, individualization of the specific stakeholders involved, staff abilities and time commitment, level of conflict, and a range of other variables to help shape the effective communication strategy.
2. Communicate early and often. The earlier your city begins to conduct communication and outreach for your project the greater the probability that your communication efforts will succeed in: 1) providing target groups with ample information before key decisions are made; 2) identifying, and possibly addressing, issues from target groups; and 3) strengthening public support. Conversely, if you launch your communication activities very late into the project’s development, the greater the probability that target groups may become angry for being excluded, raise issues or concerns not addressed by the project, or attempt to stop or stall the project.
3. Create a professional and memorable image. Target groups in cities receive thousands of verbal and non-verbal messages a day. These messages are your competition, which means you must take the time to create a sharp public image for your project. This includes the development and continued use of a logo along with sharp and memorable catch phrases. This also means using photos, maps, colour renderings of the project, and the use of colour in as many communication products you can afford.
4. Create a momentum of communication activity. One of the most effective ways to compete against the thousands of other messages target groups receive is to create a momentum of communication activity. This means using as many communication strategies as you have time to develop and can afford to produce.
5. Write creatively and simply. For many target groups, including the public, the technical aspects of these projects can be quite difficult to understand. Flyers, newsletters, press releases, speeches and other materials should be written with a creative, not technical, tone. Consider hiring a talented writer for these activities.
6. Be Creative! Move beyond just writing newsletters and holding public meetings to creating memorable public events that blend cultural activities with information and education about the project. Look for ways to grab people’s attention throughout the duration of the project.
7. Take the time to develop an informative and educational website for your STREAM Cities project. There are many different formulas of success for city websites, but the important guidelines include: 1) creating a link to your city’s official website (if not a part of your city’s website); 2) using photos, video, maps and graphics to help tell the story; 3) describing the project using clearly written and non-technical text; and 4) creating easy access to detailed reports and documentation for interested target groups.
8. Manage the accuracy of information. Nothing can be more harmful to your communication campaign than inaccurate information released to target groups. To manage your information carefully, identify only a few high level government staff that talk to the press. Other pointers include: training staff on the content of information; reviewing all public information materials in draft form; and advising staff to say “I don’t know” than possible give an incorrect answer.

9. Involve target groups only when your city is willing to meaningfully involve them in the decision-making process. While there can be tremendous benefits to involving target groups in the planning and development of your STREAM Cities project, it can be an unforgivable error to ask for input and not use community ideas in shaping the project. Be clear on what aspects of the project is flexible and where the city is interested in having target groups shape the outcome. If there is no real room for modification due to political, technical or financial realities, stick to building strong information and/or education campaigns.

10. When in doubt, use communication experts to help shape and sharpen your message. Consider hiring a public communication or public process experts to help design and implement your communication activities. They possess the skills and experience to strengthen the effectiveness of your communication plan. If your resources are tight, consider hiring an expert to help with strategy design (the development of the initial communication plan). When possible, have them train city staff so staff learn the skills to manage similar efforts in the future.

Chapter 2: CONDUCTING A PRELIMINARY RESEARCH TO INVOLVE PEOPLE IN THE PROJECT

Prior to creating a stakeholders involving plan for a STREAM Cities project, there are a series of basic questions a city should ask to help define its involvement and communication efforts. Communication and planning experts engaged on large scale projects generally begin by conducting a preliminary communications and outreach assessment. The assessment consists of interviewing the city-stakeholders: municipal staff and target group leaders (such as artisans, students, teachers, young women and all the people involved in the tourism services and management). Often the questions are asked by an external consultant or expert that was hired to help the municipality. In other cases, city staff is responsible for making this assessment. The next few pages provide a basic vademecum for conducting such an assessment, through the analysis of the city context, the intent of your communication efforts, and the available resources and capabilities to design and implement an involving plan.

1) The city context

First of all, you have to understand what is the city context (governance issues and target group perceptions) that may influence your STREAM Cities project.

The city context primarily pertains to the governance of your city, how decisions are made, and the transparency of its decision making. City context also extends to the political and communication dynamics associated with the project itself. Listed below are the areas of questioning that will help surface your city's willingness and effectiveness in implementing a communication strategy. Every area (such as Governance, Level of controversy, etc) has got its specific issues to work out. Note that these are not the specific questions to ask during the interviews. Your city should develop questions using these bullets below as a guide.

Governance

1) Do decision-makers (e.g. the Mayor) expect certain outcomes for this project? To what extent are these expectations (i.e., key decisions) about the project already decided?

2) How flexible are decision-makers to the idea of modifying the project to address ideas, issues or concerns of target groups? How flexible is the technical team?

3) How involved do decision-makers want or need to be in the project (e.g., is there a commission that needs to approve the project)?

4) If decision-makers are wanting/needing to be heavily involved in the decision making, what helps influence their decision-making (e.g., is it purely technical information? Is it the lobbying of particular target groups? Was the decision actually already made and the process is now project execution?)

Level of Controversy

- 1) Is the project controversial right now? Are people expressing real concern about the project?
- 2) Do particular target groups see this project as a threat for a particular reason?
- 3) Have target groups in the same area as this project been vocal and visible about other planning or development efforts?
- 4) Do you or other persons in your agency believe that this project will become controversial? This could be because the project may generate new impacts.

Credibility Issues

- 1) Have target groups expressed difficulties in trusting the municipality, the mayor, or the particular agency leading the project?
- 2) Does your municipality have a history of not implementing agreements, plans or promises in the city and has it been noticed by target groups?

Interest or stake from target groups

Target groups are groups or individuals that have an interest or stake in the outcome of the project such as:

- Business associations
- Business owners
- Environmental groups
- Artisans groups
- Schools
- Tourism services staff
- Residents that rent or own property in the area
- Youth
- Senior citizens
- The general public

- 1) Have particular target groups expressed a need or desire to learn more information or be more involved in this project or other projects?
- 2) Are there community groups, neighbourhood organizations, or others in your city that has a history of asking for more information or requesting more involvement?
- 3) Do target groups have a history of active involvement or participation in publicly funded projects?
- 4) Is there a country or city mandate for involving or informing target groups in government decisions?
- 5) Has your city been threatened or have been sued over decisions made pertaining public projects?
- 6) Who are the target groups in the project area? What other target groups outside of the project area may have interest?

2) The intent of your communication efforts

In general terms, there are three degrees of communication and outreach when you organize public meetings for a STREAM City project:

1. To inform target groups of the project and increase overall project awareness.
2. To educate target groups and help them understand the complexity of issues.
3. To involve target groups in defining the project outcome.

Choosing between informing, educating and involving has significant implications in the amount of power that is shared, the amount of time and resources allocated to communications, and the outcome of the final project. For this reason, it is important that your city conduct the Communication Assessment to understand what your city is capable and willing to complete.

For instance, if a municipality chooses to:

Inform target groups, communication flows one-way: from the municipality to the target groups. Target groups are provided basic information about the project, including project need and schedule. While the communication efforts for informing target groups can be substantial, creative, and exciting, the intent is limited to solely raising awareness of the STREAM City project.

Educate target groups, communication still flows one-way but the level of communication is greatly expanded in both depth and breadth. In these cases, target groups are educated about why this project is necessary, the range of tough choices that need to be made, and details on what technical studies have revealed.

Involve target groups, communication flows two-ways: between the target groups and the municipality. In these cases, target groups share some degree of power in shaping the final outcome of the project. The intent with involving target groups is to improve the quality of the project for the target groups that are impacted in some way by the STREAM City project. In these cases, communication efforts are generally more resource and time intensive compared to information and education campaigns.

3) The available resources and capabilities to design and implement an involving plan

Before finalizing your plan to involve stakeholders and general people, you will need to determine the resources (both financial and staff) and staff capabilities to successfully implement the plan. Listed below are sample questions that may help determine the level of effort your city is able to conduct throughout the STREAM City project.

Resources

1) How much of the project money is dedicated to organize public meetings to involve people in the project?

2) What existing communication tools do you currently have in place (e.g., does your municipality already have a website)?

3) Who is responsible for leading the communications component of the project (is it the city's communication office or the agency in charge of the technical work)?

4) How many staff can work on the organization of public meetings to involve people in the project? What is their skill level and amount of experience? What are those experiences? Do they match the needs of this project?

Timeline

- 1) What is the general timeline for the project?
- 2) Is the timeline realistic?
- 3) Does the schedule allow enough time to inform, educate, or involve target groups?
- 4) How flexible is the timeline? Is it possible to modify or extend the timeline to allow for more communication and outreach?

Chapter 3: TO INFORM, TO EDUCATE, TO INVOLVE

This list (taken from the Grands Travaux communication plan) includes examples of communication activities and specific tools when the intent is to inform, educate or to involve. Clearly you will not have the time nor the resources to complete all of these activities but they may help you experiment with different strategies to include people in your project.² (Note that it is not necessary for every communication activity to have an “involvement” component)

1) Press

Communication Activity:	To Inform:	To Educate:	To Involve:
Press releases.	Good method to inform.	Press releases can be more educational in focus but will require press releases to be longer in length.	Not applicable.
Editorial boards (meetings with newspaper editors to discuss a project in great detail so future articles are as accurate and descriptive as possible).	Good method to inform but better for projects where the intent is to educate.	Excellent opportunity to educate.	Not applicable.
Press conferences.	Good method to inform.	Effective method to educate. To educate effectively will require carefully written talking points (speech), press releases and press kits.	Not applicable.
Press tours of the project site.	Effective method to inform. Creates terrific	Excellent opportunity to educate by	Not applicable.

² From Julie Wagner, “Grands Travaux Handbook”, Draft - April 2004

Communication Activity:	To Inform:	To Educate:	To Involve:
	opportunities for photographs.	providing more of the details.	
Radio shows.	Can be an effective method to inform. Important to learn what radio shows target groups listen to regularly.	Excellent opportunity to educate by providing more of the details, if time allows. Important to learn what radio shows target groups listen to regularly.	Not applicable.
Local television shows.	Effective method to inform but better for education since more time is likely available.	Excellent opportunity to educate by providing more of the details.	Not applicable.

2) Paid Advertising

Communication Activity:	To Inform:	To Educate:	To Involve:
Newspaper ads.	Effective method to inform when you are not receiving enough press. Make sure the newspaper places the ad in the section with local news (not in the classified section) and away from other ads. Also needs to be graphically appealing.	If you can afford a larger ad, you will have some room to educate readers. Make sure the ad is graphically appealing as it needs to grab the attention of readers.	If you can afford a larger ad, you can add a section where specific questions are asked. Readers write their responses and mail the section to the City.
Newspaper inserts (pay for an additional section of the newspaper that is literally inserted as a separate section of the paper).	Good method to inform and educate but can be very expensive. Make sure the insert is not placed in the advertisement or job placement section.	Good method to inform and educate because there is much more room to write the details. Include graphics, maps and or photographs and key statistics or data that make readers understand <u>why</u> the project is needed.	Also include a section where readers can write in responses to questions. Prominently display the address where responses can be mailed.
Radio advertisements.	Can be effective but worth assessing what times of the day or week ads will reach target groups.	If you pay for additional time, you have opportunities to expand awareness.	Not applicable.
Television	Effective but more costly	Can be very effective	Not applicable.

Communication Activity:	To Inform:	To Educate:	To Involve:
advertisements.	than most other communication activities.	but is very costly.	
Advertisements in local locations (including pre-movie spots, advertisements on public transportation).	Excellent methods to inform because they can be placed in areas where target groups are located.	Not applicable because there is not enough room to educate.	Not applicable.

3) City Communication and Outreach Activities

Communication Activity:	To Inform:	To Educate:	To Involve:
Flyers (generally one page documents) sent to: the entire population within a particular zip code; distributed at central locations; or sent to specific target groups.	Can be a very effective to inform. Flyers need to be very visually appealing with graphics and/or photos. Take the time to make them look professional.	Can be a very effective method to educate if the flyer is expanded into a newsletter (average length is four pages). Make sure newsletter is graphically appealing.	The newsletter includes a section where specific questions are asked to readers about the project. Readers mail in responses to specific questions.
Attend existing meetings of specific target groups.	Very effective method. Attending an existing meeting generally means that key decision-makers and active members will be present. Call several weeks before the meeting to have time reserved on the agenda.	Effective method to educate. Since these meetings have other items on the agenda, less time is available to discuss the project. Call several weeks before the meeting and ask to have 20-25 minutes on the agenda.	Somewhat effective method to involve if the city asks specific questions, which are then documented and used to help shape the project outcome. However, time is generally limited.
Meetings with target groups specifically scheduled to discuss project (not at the time of target groups' regular meetings).	Effective method to inform. Most likely fewer members will attend because it is not their regularly scheduled meeting.	Effective method to educate. Have more time to educate target groups of the project but fewer people may attend because it is not their regularly scheduled meeting.	Somewhat effective method to involve if the city asks specific questions, which are then documented and used to help shape the project outcome. However, time is generally limited.
Signage near project area.	Can be an effective method to inform if signage is large and prominently displayed.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Website dedicated to the project or a new section added to the existing city website.	Effective method to inform depending on the percentage of target groups that learn	Effective method to inform and educate depending on the percentage of target	Effective method to involve if there is a section dedicated for public feedback.

Communication Activity:	To Inform:	To Educate:	To Involve:
	information through websites. Important to learn how many people in the city use this medium.	groups that learn information through websites. Important to learn how many people in the city use this medium.	Important to learn how many people in the city use this medium.
Electronic blitzes to email listserves.	See website information (above).	See website information (above).	See website information (above).
Information included in city bills.	Somewhat effective method to inform and generally cost-free. Difficult to assess whether messages successfully reached target groups.	Not enough space.	Not applicable.
Public meetings, public workshops, and open houses organized by the city.	Effective method to inform but well designed public meetings will have some educational components.	Very effective method to educate. Be sure to write and distribute written materials at the meeting that participants can read and take home. Two options on how to educate: 1) public presentations; 2) open house (large boards with printed text/images which are displayed around the room).	One of the more effective methods to involve target groups. How these meetings are designed is especially critical. Hiring experienced meeting designers and facilitators are strongly recommended. Feedback from target groups can be gathered by feedback forms, small group discussions, voting, and more.
Charrette (intensive architectural, planning and design workshops over several days where experts, city staff and the public work to develop project options).	Hold the charrette but instead of having the public participate, have them observe and ask questions. Present findings at the end with a press conference.	Hold the charrette but instead of having the public participate, have them observe and ask questions. Present findings at the end with a press conference.	Hold the charrette and have the public participate at key points. Present findings at the end with a press conference.
Pre-taped segment about the project on the city television channel (if your city has a municipal TV channel).	Effective method to inform depending on the number of people that watch this channel.	Effective method to educate depending on the number of people that watch this channel.	Not applicable.

Communication Activity:	To Inform:	To Educate:	To Involve:
<p>Advisory Committees (a designated committee comprised of key representatives from a wide range of target groups interested about project outcome).</p>	<p>Very effective method to inform but generally advisory committees are formed to provide education and involvement activities.</p>	<p>Very effective method to educate. In fact, members of the advisory committee can then educate other members of the target group. Advisory Committees also provide advice to the City about the project (involve).</p>	<p>One of the more effective methods to involve target groups (along with broadly advertised public meetings and workshops). Critical that advisory members share information with their target group and collectively determine what feedback to give the city.</p>
<p>Project office (where a communication staff person is located on certain days. The public can come and learn more information and talk to staff).</p>	<p>Very effective method to inform (notice of the project office must be listed in almost all public materials and with a visible sign near the office)</p>	<p>Very effective method to educate. Project office needs to have copies of all technical reports, maps, etc that people and read at the office.</p>	<p>Effective method to involve if there is a consistent methodology for gathering comments, which are then used to help shape the project outcome.</p>
<p>Dedicated telephone line.</p>	<p>Effective method if the staff person answering the phone is knowledgeable of the <u>basic</u> information.</p>	<p>Effective method if staff person answering the phone is knowledgeable of the <u>technical</u> details of the project.</p>	<p>Can be effective if there is a strong and consistent methodology for gathering comments over the phone (e.g., phone log; all comments entered directly into computer, etc.).</p>
<p>Random sample surveys</p>	<p>Very effective method for gauging target group impressions and perceptions. Can be used prior to, and after, extensive communication and outreach efforts to determine effectiveness of the public information campaign.</p>	<p>Very effective method for gauging target group impressions and perceptions. Can be used prior to, and after, extensive communication and outreach efforts to determine effectiveness of the public education campaign.</p>	<p>Very effective method for gauging target group impressions and perceptions. Can be used prior to, and after, extensive communication and outreach efforts to determine effectiveness of the public involvement campaign.</p>

Note: Helpful Communication Hints

During the process of developing a communication and outreach plan, remember to think through and reconcile project management issues. This includes:

Who designs and implements the communication plan for the STREAM City project. The planners, architects and/or engineers leading the technical aspects of the project most likely have formal authority over managing the STREAM City projects. If you...

- 1)...are internal to this office and have the mandate to manage the communication activities, it can be quite easy to coordinate these two functions if done early in the process.
- 2)...are external to this office and have the mandate to lead the communication components of the STREAM City project, you will need to establish how to work with the technical team. Holding meetings regularly in their office can be an effective way to strengthen the team.
- 3)...are external to this office and do not have a formal mandate to work on the STREAM City project (but have specific communication experience that would improve the project), talk with your superior to determine if/how a formal relationship can be established.

Chapter 4: PUBLIC MEETINGS: PLANNING ACTIVITIES, INVOLVING PEOPLE, GATHERING FEEDBACKS

As you begin to implement a communication plan, remember that attention to detail, creativity, and sensitivity to the needs of your target groups will be essential for success. To reach this purpose, it's basic to organize accessible, inviting and productive public meetings.

Organising public meetings is a very effective communication strategy to involve people in your project.

After identifying key target groups in the area of the project (business associations, active neighbourhood associations, etc) schedule to meet with as many key target groups as time permits.

1) Planning activities

To organize a successful public meeting is better to work out a plan of action through the activities listed below:

- Generate mailing lists and email list serves of target groups (including the general public) that are may be interested in the project.
- Hold briefings with key target groups that will be impacted by this project. Meet with these groups before any information is shared in the newsletter, to the press or other forms of outreach.
- Write, design and publicly distribute a flyer and a newsletter that provide basic information about the project, such as: what is the project, what are the land use boundaries of the area, what is the general project schedule; what agency is leading the project; who is in charge of the project; and how they can be reached. Make sure the language is not too technical and that the flyer is graphically appealing.

- Attend scheduled meetings of organized target groups (generally held monthly or bi-monthly) to inform them of the project including future milestones (major decisions) that are yet to be made.
- Develop and launch a press campaign
- Create a dedicated telephone line or project office in the project area to answer questions from the public. Staff person must be knowledgeable, possess the ability to share only accurate and true information, and be willing to follow up on any questions not known.
- Develop signage near the project area that presents the project concept along with the name and telephone number of a city staff.
- If technical findings appear to be newsworthy, write press releases or ask to meet with key newspaper reporters to share technical findings. Help them understand the most important technical findings to keep the news as accurate as possible.
- Hold a charrette (an intensive session of architectural, planning and design work conducted over a several day period). Target groups and the public can come and observe. General outcomes are a range of project alternatives
- Organize a press conference to release the details of the project. Provide illustrations, renderings and graphics. Prepare and distribute press packets at the press conference.

Then, consider these suggestions below when designing a public meeting:

- 1) Find a meeting place that is: centrally located for your target groups, easily accessible for senior citizens and people with physical disabilities, equipped with good lighting and plenty of chairs and tables, and provided with the sound acoustics to fit your needs (especially if there will be public presentations).
- 2) Designate one staff person as the “greeter” to welcome people at the door and ask them to sign in by writing their name, address and telephone number.
- 3) Offer some light refreshments (such as coffee and cookies) to make people feel comfortable.
- 4) Consider creating a children’s section so busy parents can still participate in the project while their children play nearby.
- 5) Think seriously about hiring a public meeting facilitator to help design and lead the public meeting. Facilitators are especially trained to help make the meeting productive and ensure that the city and participants are communicating effectively.

2) Involving people

The meetings can be held with one or two recognized leaders of each target group. Examples of questions to ask include:

- [Let them know about the proposed project]. Are they aware of this project concept? If yes, how did they know?
 - What are their thoughts about the project? What are their thoughts on how to share information about the project?
 - How do they learn information about issues/projects?
 - What meetings do they have and attend? Are there opportunities for someone from the city to come and share information about the project?
 - What is the best way to include their target group in the project (this question is for a community involvement process)?

- Do they have any suggestions on how to strengthen the city's communication strategies (mention some communication activities your city is contemplating to use or use again for this project)?
- Who else in the project area would be interested in the project and should be contacted?
- Do they have any other thoughts, issues, ideas, concerns that they want to share? (Important to have a truly open ended question).

3) Gathering feedbacks

It's fundamental gathering community feedback on the project by: 1) Creating small groups of participants (each with a facilitator) and allowing time for participants to share ideas, suggestions, concerns about the project; or 2) Keeping all participants together but providing feedback forms that participants fill out

Then it's a good idea to form an Advisory Committee to meet and provide focused input on the project. Members of the Advisory Committee should represent a diversity of target groups. Clarify the role of the Committee (e.g., do they provide recommendations?) and how they make decisions as a group.

You can also create feedback forms for newsletters and in newspaper advertisements. Although the average response rate for feedback forms in newsletters and newspapers is approximately three to four percent, the comments commonly received identify many of the critical issues and concerns held by target group members early in the process.

1) For newsletters: Locate your feedback forms near the end of the newsletter. Earlier sections of the newsletter should be dedicated to explaining the project, why the project is needed, and the project schedule.

2) For newspaper ads: Design and place newspaper ads in the local news section of the newspaper. Be sure the newspaper does not place your ad in the classified section (where job advertisements are placed). The ad should be as large as you can afford and placed prominently within this section of the newspaper. Graphically design the ad to grab the attention of newspaper readers.

After all these activities you can re-assess the communication plan based on conversations with target groups. It is possible that target groups will advise the city to modify its communication strategies. Review city context issues, communication intent, and resources to determine what can be modified.