COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Act 46 Implementation Project

Goal: To support the study committee by outlining the phases of community engagement involved in bringing a merger plan to the electorate for a vote. The objective is to educate the electorate on the data, the process, and the vision for merger, provide a forum for feedback, and present the ultimate plan.

Four Phases:

      I.   Educate and engage
- Rationale for the bill
- Requirements of the bill and likely outcome
- Opportunities within the bill
- The bill and the SU (get specific)

Suggested Tools:

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
Op-Ed	Reaches out to a broad group; beyond the "usual suspects" Maintains maximum control of information Media exposure	Media exposure
Online supports	Can be used to recruit participants and coordinate organizers Can disseminate deliberation materials for use beyond formal community meetings and allows for more educated follow-up	Requires technical assistance (We can help!) Requires ongoing follow-up Requires a community that actively seeks information Due to open meeting laws, cannot have forum.
Board Meetings	Can be videotaped and posted on website.	Due to open meeting laws, cannot have forum.

      II.   Sharing of analysis
- Equity and quality and cost—
  - What will happen if we do nothing
  - What are our opportunities
- Options under consideration

Suggested Tools:

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
Online Supports	Can disseminate deliberation materials for use beyond formal community meetings and allows for more educated forum follow-up Provides opportunity for public validation and digestion of complicated information	Requires technical assistance Requires ongoing follow-up
Community Meetings	Provides for immediate legitimization of information Opportunity to respond to questions immediately	Requires expertise to do well Less control over information Tends to reach only the "usual suspects"
Focus Groups	Efficient way to gain input Maintains maximum control of information	Less effective than other strategies for legitimizing plans Requires money and expertise to do well

      III.   Sharing of the plan/Receive public input
- Share plan
- Questions, comments, suggestions to improve the plan

Suggested Tools:

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
Stakeholder Dialogue	Targets key groups Relatively inexpensive Requires minimal special expertise, technical assistance	Time-consuming Limited impact on community overall Can be politically tricky to include some stakeholders and not others
Community Forums	Engages the most people Generates new ideas Raises general awareness through direct contact, word-of-mouth, and media attention	Labor-intensive Requires significant planning and lead time Requires ongoing follow-up
Online Supports	Can disseminate deliberation materials for use beyond formal community meetings. Provides opportunity for public validation and digestion of complicated information	Requires technical assistance Requires ongoing follow-up
Op-Ed	Reaches out to a broad group; beyond the "usual suspects" Maintains maximum control of information Media exposure	Media exposure

IV. Presentation of the plan
- Inform!

Suggested Tools

Strategy	Strength	Weakness
Media Coverage	Engages the most people Raises general awareness	Less control over information
Community Meetings	Opportunity to respond to questions	Suggests that the plan is still in formation

The consultant should empower the committee to develop a communications plan. Members of the study committee should be clearly assigned individual responsibility for each activity in the plan, as well as specific vehicles (Front Porch Forum, Facebook, Op-Ed, etc) and the specific audiences to reach.