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PART II: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOL KIT

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Section 1 – Introduction

Public trust and acceptance are essential to the conveyance and treatment of wastewater. Public involvement professionals educate the public and work to create trust and support. Public involvement builds support for new programs, avoids entrenched opposition and supports policy decisions. It can help projects stay on time and within budget.

King County's Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) is facing some major challenges. The WTD staff is planning and expanding the wastewater system to meet the needs of our growing region, looking for new and better ways to reuse byproducts and to protect the environment for people and fish, and working to improve productivity and cost effectiveness. Public involvement is essential to WTD's success. The goal of public involvement is to support successful implementation of WTD projects and programs.

The responsibility for public involvement rests with WTD managers, project managers and staff, in other words with all WTD staff. WTD community relations planners, as part of a project team, are charged with guiding the development of public involvement strategies and tools to support successful implementation of WTD projects. These guidelines are designed to help WTD community relations planners develop and implement public involvement programs, with support from staff throughout WTD and external consultants and other external resources.

1. BACKGROUND

The goal of King County's long range comprehensive plan is to protect public health and the environment by conveying, treating and reclaiming wastewater for the next 30 years; public involvement is critical to achieving that goal. Public involvement enables the kind of balanced, thoughtful decision-making necessary to implement the design and construction of new facilities as well as operate and maintain existing facilities. By integrating across projects, programs and functional areas, WTD can make a lasting contribution to the quality of life and the environment in King County today and in the future.

Public involvement is more than a King County requirement and more than a means of fulfilling a legal obligation. At its highest level, public involvement should accomplish the following:

- Support the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP), County Executive and County Council decision-making processes.
- Enable WTD to respond to public comment, make changes to plans and improve decision-making.
- Meet legal requirements, such as environmental regulations and County ordinances.
- Pave the way for smoother, more effective projects.
- Help to build strong links with key public groups, local neighbors, businesses and other constituencies.

- Foster an understanding and garner support for new programs.

These guidelines serve as both a map and a tool kit for designing and implementing public involvement programs in WTD. WTD planners can assist project managers by using these guidelines to do the following:

- Customize a public involvement approach for programs or projects of varying size, scope, budget and stakeholder complexity.
- Coordinate internal and external resources to enhance productivity.
- Meet legal requirements.
- Evaluate a public involvement program's effectiveness.

2. ROADMAP FOR THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT GUIDELINES

Each section of the guidelines describes an important step in the process of studying, planning and implementing public involvement, and each step builds on the ones that came before it. The tools and approaches described in the guidelines are most effective when used in succession. Reading and applying each section in turn is the best means to an effective and successful public involvement program.

Section 1: Introduction to Public Involvement

The opening section of the guidelines will introduce the philosophy and benefits of public involvement. It provides a roadmap for how to use the guidelines.

Section 2: Role of Public Involvement in the King County Wastewater Treatment Division

Section 2 will orient the reader to the mission and values of WTD and its community relations staff. It explains how these ideas guide public involvement within WTD. This section will introduce key terms and concepts to carry and use through the rest of the guidelines. A planner's work is shaped by legal and regulatory requirements. Those requirements – or drivers – are explained in Section 2. After defining the drivers, Section 2 will discuss the role of the community relations planner as a member of a project team — and how activities can be coordinated within DNRP and with other agencies.

Section 3: Implementing Public Involvement

Section 3 provides the concrete steps for designing and implementing a public involvement program. It will lead the reader through a deliberate exercise to determine the scope and complexity of the potential public involvement effort followed by each of the steps necessary to design a comprehensive public involvement strategy that is appropriate for the project.

Section 4: Resources (Internal and External)

Using the public involvement plan developed in Section 3, Section 4 will help identify the staff, time and material resources needed to carry it out. Section 4 defines the roles of internal staff and external consultants. Concrete advice on how to solicit, evaluate and contract with consultants is also provided.

Section 5: Evaluation

The purpose of Section 5 is to help community relations planners and other County staff evaluate the effectiveness and success of public involvement efforts. This section will present a standard process for evaluating and documenting public involvement efforts.

Section 6: Information Management

Section 6 provides instruction on how to manage and document the information, plans, materials and correspondence generated through public involvement programs. This section also introduces the public involvement module of the WTD's Project Management and Financial Forecasting Database.

Public Involvement Tool Kit

This tool kit describes all the tools that King County routinely uses to implement a public involvement plan – printed materials, signs, online communications, public information distribution, media, advertising, public meetings, contact information and hotlines, and outreach to stakeholders, general public and individuals. This comprehensive tool kit includes definitions and discussions of how each tool supports a project, when to use it, and what resources are needed.

Besides these guidelines, the *Public Involvement Resource Guide* has been developed. This resource guide contains copies of pertinent County policies and procedures as well as resources to support use of the tools. The resource guide will be updated and added to continually.

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Section 2 – The Role of Public Involvement in the King County Wastewater Treatment Division

The practice of public involvement in the King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) is motivated by a number of drivers, both inside and outside WTD. First and foremost, it is influenced by the mission of the WTD – to protect public health and the environment. Beyond that mission, public involvement is shaped by both the concrete guidance set forth in County codes and ordinances as well as by more theoretical goals of what public involvement, as a discipline, should achieve.

Finally, because public involvement does not exist simply on paper, but in the working reality of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP), it is shaped by its role and place within WTD. Community relations planners must design and implement effective public involvement programs that not only serve the needs of WTD but also can be integrated with other efforts in DNRP and coordinated with the efforts of other agencies that operate within the borders of King County.

This section includes the following:

1. Mission Statement
2. Philosophy of Public Involvement
3. Regulatory Drivers for Public Involvement in King County
4. The WTD Team
5. Integration with Other County Programs
6. Coordination with Other Agencies
7. Summary

1. MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of King County WTD community relations is to support WTD in protecting public health and the environment by doing the following:

- Informing and educating the public about our operations and services
- Promoting public participation in decision making
- Responding to the concerns and issues of residents, organizations and businesses.

2. PHILOSOPHY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is a process of active, deliberate engagement of an identified set of audiences in a proposed program, idea, debate, project or concept to incorporate their interests and concerns into decision making. Engagement is the key to public involvement. This principle means that information is not only flowing out from the County, but input is also coming back from the community. Public involvement is the practice that enables the public to ask questions, express concerns and offer suggestions. Public involvement goes beyond alerting people that a decision is being made to actually involving them in a decision-making process. The terms "public involvement" and "public participation" are synonymous.

A public involvement program does not try to sell the public on a particular program or service or sway community sentiment. Public involvement provides people with the information to form their own opinions about an issue or project and the mechanisms to make their voices heard. It is this characteristic that distinguishes public involvement from public relations.

Community relations is a specific type of public involvement. In contrast to public involvement, community relations activities are not designed to obtain public input to decision-making. Instead, community relations activities focus on informing and educating people to assist them in understanding a program, alternative or solution. Community relations activities also include providing a means for people to ask questions and convey concerns, and ensuring reasonable and prompt responses to concerns, questions or complaints.

It is community relations activities that alert the public to a new project, inform them about construction impacts or educate them about programs like water reuse or habitat conservation. Targeted, strategic community relations is an important part of public involvement. While it helps build relationships and conveys needed information, it does not provide meaningful opportunities for involvement in the decision-making process.

In WTD, public involvement activities are conducted by water quality planners with professional expertise in public involvement and communications. In the most recent division reorganization, the public involvement professionals were moved into a unit called Environmental Planning and Community Relations. For this reason, they are referred to as community relations planners in this document.

At the end of the day, the practice of public involvement offers King County, and all other public agencies, the following benefits:

- Public involvement creates an informed, well-educated public that understands the need for WTD programs and the public good that comes out of them.

- Based on understanding, trust and a feeling of being considered in the decision-making process, public involvement leads to community acceptance of WTD decisions, projects and programs.

- By anticipating and responding to public and local agency issues and concerns, public involvement paves the way for smoother, more cost-effective projects.

- Finally, public involvement provides the framework and the methodology to support and achieve the goals of the WTD and King County as a whole.

3. REGULATORY DRIVERS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN KING COUNTY

In December 1999, the King County Council adopted Ordinance 13680, which broadly updated King County's Comprehensive Water Pollution Abatement Plan. This update, termed the Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP), is a 30-year capital improvement program designed

to provide wastewater capacity for this region's rapidly growing population and to protect its aquatic resources.

Ordinance 13680 has been codified in King County Code (KCC), Chapter 28.86, Wastewater Treatment. KCC 28.86.150 sets forth Public Involvement Policies (PIP) and states:

"The public involvement policies are intended to guide the County in maintaining public information and education programs and to engage the public and component agencies in the planning, designing and operating decisions that affect them."

KCC 28.86.150 includes the following specific Public Involvement Policies, which provide the basis for all WTD public involvement activities:

- PIP-1: King County shall maintain public information/education programs and engage the public and component agencies of local sewer service in the planning, designing and operating decisions affecting them.
- PIP-2: King County shall develop public information and education programs to support County wastewater programs and shall lay the groundwork for public understanding of and involvement in specific programs.
- PIP-3: King County shall involve public officials and citizens of affected jurisdictions early and actively in the planning and decision-making process for capital projects.
- PIP-4: King County shall inform affected residents and businesses in advance of capital construction projects.
- PIP-5: King County shall disseminate information and provide education to the general public, private sector and governmental agencies regarding the status, needs and potential future of the region's water resources.
- PIP-6: King County shall actively solicit and incorporate public opinions throughout the implementation of its comprehensive plan.
- PIP-7: Beginning January 1, 2001, King County shall implement a public awareness and education program regarding the environmental impacts and costs to wastewater ratepayers of infiltration and inflow (I/I) in the local and regional conveyance systems.
- PIP-8: King County shall support regional water supply agencies and water purveyors in their public education campaign on the need and ways to conserve water. King County should promote pilot projects that support homeowner water conservation in coordination with water suppliers and purveyors, emphasizing strategies and technologies that reduce wastewater.

KCC 28.86 also addresses public involvement in other sections: treatment plants, I/I, combined sewer overflows, water reuse, wastewater service, wastewater planning, and environmental mitigation. WTD community relations planners should routinely refer to the KCC to review policy guidance for designing and conducting public involvement programs.

4. THE WTD TEAM

WTD is responsible for planning, designing, building, maintaining and operating treatment and conveyance facilities of the wastewater system for King County. Functional groups within WTD

provide operation and maintenance, project management, design, construction management, facilities inspection, right-of-way and permitting, project control and administrative support to WTD programs and projects.

Integrating public involvement into every aspect of WTD activities requires the commitment of all WTD staff. WTD community relations planners are a resource to WTD staff, and often work as a member of a team to meet project requirements.

An example of a team effort is how WTD handles capital projects. Team members typically include a project manager, engineers, construction management, project control, environmental planners, right-of-way and permitting agents, community relations planners and a host of other disciplines (for example, architecture, flow modeling, geotechnical). Once hired, external consultants become part of the project team.

The **project manager** is responsible for managing scope, schedule, budget, client relations, quality and external stakeholder relations. With support from the community relations planner and/or consultant, the project manager also takes an active role in overall public involvement. The project manager reinforces the importance of public involvement to successful project completion, and often acts as the public spokesperson. The project manager can also ensure that public involvement is integrated with other project activities, and encourage active participation of the entire project team.

Community relations planners are responsible for advising the project manager and the project team on required public involvement activities and activities that are recommended to ensure the community has an opportunity to be involved. The planner is the team member delegated the responsibility for planning and implementing public involvement activities. However, an activity is most effective when the entire project team participates in implementation.

An example of how a public involvement activity is planned and implemented is a community meeting. A community relations planner plans a community meeting and makes the necessary arrangements. However, the planner may need to work closely with an environmental planner to ensure full compliance with the public notice and comment requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act. In the same time period, a right-of-way and permitting agent may need to obtain written permission from property owners, so the County can conduct soil and groundwater investigations for the project. The design team may want feedback on the preliminary site layout or appearance of the facility. The project manager usually makes a presentation at the meeting and responds to questions. The planner works with the entire team to design and conduct a community meeting that meets all the project objectives. Section 3 of these guidelines and the *Public Involvement Tool Kit* provide information on how to design and conduct public involvement activities.

WTD community relations planners also support ongoing operations and maintenance activities. Planners conduct tours and open houses, and facilitate communications about major facilities with neighboring communities in order to foster community support for new programs, help avoid entrenched community opposition and facilitate emergency response. In this case, planners work with WTD operations and maintenance staff to plan and conduct tours and open

houses, maintain contact with interested neighbors, and hold regular meetings with organized community groups.

WTD community relations planners also participate in emergency planning activities, to streamline emergency response efforts and avoid mistakes by developing clear protocols for communicating about emergency events. The purpose of the *2001 Wastewater Treatment Division Overflow Manual* is to ensure that the WTD delivers a consistent response to planned and emergency overflows. The overflow manual leads a planner through the WTD's official outreach procedures and can be found in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

Some WTD programs have their own unique public involvement needs. For example, the WTD Industrial Waste Program's constituency is primarily business and industry, while the Biosolids Management Program deals with constituencies both inside and outside the WTD's service area, including the public near biosolids application sites in eastern Washington. These guidelines are a resource for all WTD programs, but recognize that some programs have unique needs.

5. INTEGRATION WITH OTHER KING COUNTY PROGRAMS

WTD community relations planners also need to be cognizant of an coordinate with each other active WTD projects in a neighborhood. Maintenance and upgrading of an existing facility occurs in parallel with planning for future capacity, response to odor complaints and overflows, and infiltration and inflow control pilot projects.

Efforts to integrate WTD public involvement activities with the programs of other divisions in DNRP and the rest of the County have been in place since King County merged with Metro in 1994. These efforts standardize and strengthen the County's messages to the public and help ensure that the outreach efforts on one project or program complement and support the efforts of others.

Integration of WTD with other DNRP programs is particularly important. WTD's Habitat Conservation Plan and the Water and Land Resources Division's watershed planning and salmon conservation programs are a case in point. The importance of this integration was recognized in 2000, when DNRP conducted the "Ribbons Process" and delivered several recommendations for implementing consistent public involvement plans across DNRP. All the relevant public involvement concepts developed during the Ribbons Process, which included key messages and standard definitions relating to wastewater and watershed planning projects, may be found in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

The **1970 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** mandates that governmental programs and services are accessible to people with disabilities. King County's ADA policy states, "No qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of such a disability, be subjected to discrimination or excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of the services, programs, activities or physical facilities which King County provides to the public."

This policy is particularly relevant to public involvement activities and programs. The King County Office of Civil Rights (OCR) helps County agencies to provide facilities, programs and services that are accessible to people with disabilities. For example, under ADA, all public

entities are required to ensure "equally effective communication" of information to all individuals served, including qualified individuals with disabilities. To fulfill this obligation, King County may need to provide auxiliary aids and services. Auxiliary aids and services include assistive listening devices, sign language interpreters and alternative formats – large print, Braille, computer disk and audiocassette tape.

The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains information on how to develop accessible printed materials and identify accessible meeting facilities. OCR can provide information and technical assistance about access laws, program accessibility and referral to other disability-related resources.

As a recipient of federal funds, King County government complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and other federal laws that prohibit discrimination against people because of their race, color or national origin, sex, age or low-income status. OCR is a resource to County agencies on compliance issues. WTD staff, and community relations planners in particular, need to be aware of age, language and socioeconomic differences of populations in our service areas when planning and designing public involvement programs. The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* contains helpful tools for identifying translators, developing partnerships with local communities and evaluating the effectiveness of outreach efforts.

6. COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

The RWSP defines component agencies as "cities, towns, counties and sewer districts that retail wastewater treatment services, that dispose of any portions of their sanitary sewage into the wastewater system and that have entered into a contract with the County for providing wastewater treatment." WTD must coordinate with these agencies, not only in technical matters like planning future conveyance system improvements, but also in matters of public communication and public involvement.

Because component agencies, rather than WTD itself, interact with wastewater customers regularly through billing and fee collection, these agencies have built-in mechanisms for communicating with the public. In addition, both WTD and the component agencies share common missions – providing an essential service to ratepayers, protecting public health, protecting the environment – so it often makes sense to collaborate and coordinate public outreach activities. For example, WTD is collaborating with component agencies to design and implement public information and involvement activities for pilot projects to test ways to remove clean water, called infiltration (groundwater) and inflow (stormwater) from the sewer systems.

Planners should also be ready to work with other local, state, federal and regional agencies on various projects or programs. Sometimes, closely coordinated work is necessary to fulfill legal and regulatory requirements. In many cases, WTD facilities are located on or near publicly owned land or parks. Local jurisdictions often have public information systems and communications structures in place, which WTD can use to efficiently and effectively communicate information. Local jurisdictions can often identify neighborhood contacts that help WTD make use of existing communications channels.

7. SUMMARY

Legal and regulatory requirements and policies shape WTD community relations planners' work. This section does not provide a comprehensive list of all laws and public involvement requirements. Instead, a few of those requirements and drivers are mentioned along with a discussion of the role of the planner as a member of a WTD team. The remaining sections of these guidelines provide information on how to develop and implement public involvement programs.

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Section 3 – Implementing Public Involvement

This section of the guidelines presents the specific details of how to develop and implement a public involvement plan. This section draws heavily on *Systematic Development of Informed Consent*[1], a public involvement method developed by Hans and Anne Marie Bleiker. They developed their methodology for governmental agencies as a way for managers to achieve implementation of difficult, contentious or controversial projects, programs or plans. The Bleiker system defines informed consent as ensuring all potentially affected audiences will consent to the project or plan – in other words, they may not agree with or like the plan or project, but they will agree not to stop it.

The underlying principle in the Bleikers' methodology is that public involvement objectives must be founded on the specific needs of the project or plan and the values of the people who will be affected by that project or plan. Public involvement planning by objectives will be discussed in detail in this section.

The King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) community relations staff applied the Bleikers' method to the water resources programs coordination or "Ribbons" work that was done in 2000. In this effort, the community relations staff developed a map of how technical work on projects or programs and media and community relations work were all woven together. The group also developed key messages for the department, focusing on the large water resource programs that the department was undertaking at the time. The Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) community relations staff has also done more messaging work and strategic planning. Reports from this work are included in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide*.

This section includes the following:

1. Define the Project
2. Identify Affected Stakeholders
3. Initial Needs Assessment (INA)
4. Define Public Involvement Resources
5. Full Needs Assessment
6. Develop Public Involvement Plan
7. Implement Public Involvement Plan
8. Ongoing Assessment
9. Project Closeout and Evaluation

These guidelines draw on the department's previous work and apply the Bleiker method to WTD. The guidelines can be used for large WTD programs as well as smaller capital and asset management projects. Figure 3-1 is a flow chart of the public involvement planning and implementation process. Public involvement activities are mapped into three possible scenarios that reflect the appropriate level of effort of public involvement – no apparent need, low level of effort, and medium-to-high level of effort.

[1] Systematic Development of Informed Consent© and the Bleiker Life Preserver are copyrighted processes of the Institute for Participatory Management & Planning. Website: www.ipmp-bleiker.com.

Although the flow chart demonstrates a typical and logical order of flow, it is always possible that things may happen out of order from time to time. For example, a community relations planner may be asked to assist with a project that is already underway or when public involvement efforts have already begun without an initial needs assessment. A project may be better defined at the end of predesign or needs may evolve as the project progresses. In either case, the planner can assess the project, determine what needs to be done, and backtrack along the flow chart to fill in the gaps.

The most important decision to be made by a community relations planner, and the starting point on the flow chart, is deciding which strategic public involvement path to take. To make that decision, three steps must be accomplished:

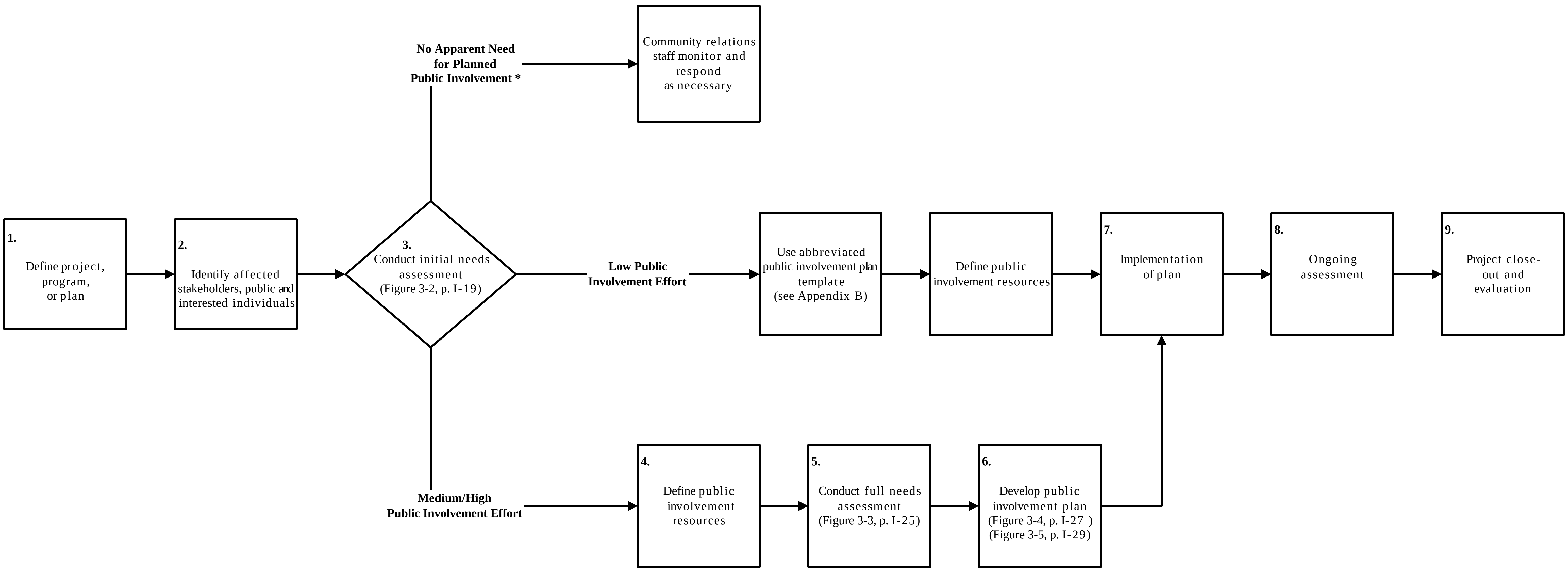
- First, the project or program must be defined.
- Second, potentially affected stakeholders, members of the public and interested individuals must be identified.
- And third, once the scope of the work is established, then an initial needs assessment must be conducted.

No matter what the size or complexity of the project, an initial needs assessment should always be conducted, even if it is the full extent of the community relations work.

Public involvement strategies must always be developed based on the needs of a project. While it is tempting to fall into a formulaic pattern of activities (for example, design projects always need public meetings and fliers), every project or program must be analyzed to determine the appropriate level of effort and specific objectives for public involvement.

Public Involvement Flow Chart

Figure 3-1



* WTD staff constantly interacts with the public in the course of doing business.
This path indicates there is no need for a separate public involvement planning effort;
or that a standard operating procedure is already in place to address the situation

It is never too late to start public involvement, at any stage of the work.

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1. Define the Project

This step in determining the public involvement needs identifies and defines the work. The project or program manager or other responsible technical person must be queried to gain an understanding of the nature of the work. To understand the work, questions should be asked to define the following:

- Type of work
- Scope of the project or program (entire service area or localized)
- Phase of work (planning, predesign, design, construction or operation)
- Project purpose/objective (problem statement/need)
- Basic project description
- Magnitude and duration
- Location of the work.

It is often helpful to define public involvement objectives for the various phases of a project (planning, predesign, design, construction or operation) and important to periodically re-evaluate the project definition as it evolves. Regardless of what phase the work is in, and whether previous public involvement work has been done or not, it is never too late to do public involvement.

2. Identify Affected Stakeholders

The community relations planner needs to have a firm grasp of the potentially affected stakeholders, members of the public or interested individuals and their potential interests and issues. These stakeholders can be individuals, groups, businesses, an institution and other agencies or public officials. Affected interests include those who may be affected by the project or program and those who *think* they may be affected. Besides defining the interested audiences, planners should consider the issues audiences might have concerning the proposed work. Planners can do a brainstorm of the possible project stakeholders by asking the following questions:

- How will this project affect residents? Businesses?
- Who will this project benefit? Inconvenience?
- Who might be inclined to oppose this project? Why?
- Who has been interested in this type of project in the past?
- What elected officials or agencies are likely to be interested/involved in this project (for example, county officials, city officials, state officials)?
- What is the history of this project, and who has been involved with it previously?
- If this is not an existing WTD site, what is the history of the project site, its use and relationship to the neighborhood?

- What is the history of WTD involvement in the area? Has WTD interacted with stakeholders in the area previously? Have media stories been published?

Coordination with other project team members is recommended at this stage.

3. Conduct Initial Needs Assessment (INA)

Once the work has been defined, the planner can begin to determine the public involvement needs of the work. An initial needs assessment (INA) is the tool that WTD community relations staff uses to take a first cut at determining the need for and level of public involvement. The INA is a guidance tool that helps staff look at a project through a coarse filter to determine potential public involvement needs.

The INA tool is a checklist that contains a series of questions about the work. These questions relate to potential community impacts, drivers for public involvement, history, political environment, and depth and breadth of the work. County community relations planners, not consultants, should always complete the initial needs assessment, as it is a critical tool for determining the appropriate level of effort for a project.

Completing the INA is rarely a desk exercise. It often requires visiting a site to gain an understanding of the project area; exploring the public involvement module of the WTD Project Management and Financial Forecasting Database (the database) to determine project or program area history; and browsing community relations files. It may also require tracking down project managers, other technical staff or even consultants who have had experience in the area or with the community in order to complete the initial needs assessment. Figure 3-2 is the INA.

Figure 3-2

Initial Needs Assessment

Directions:

- The Initial Needs Assessment (INA) is a guidance tool that helps staff look at a project through a coarse filter to determine public involvement needs.
- Complete the INA to determine the level of public involvement.
- Read the questions or statements in each section. Determine whether it receives a check mark.
- If the answer is "yes," check the box.
- Total the number of checks in each section and multiply that total by the value assigned in the shaded area, to get the score for that section.
- Add all the scores for each section to calculate your score total.
- Use the ranking spread at the bottom of sheet two; determine the level of public involvement that will be needed for the project. Refer to the Public Involvement Flow Chart for next steps.

Every question should be considered to provide an accurate assessment; research may be needed.

Project Definition: *(*Briefly describe your project and define if it is a new facility, conveyance, predesign, design or construction effort.)

			Score
1	**Potential community impacts (positive or negative):**	Do you anticipate any of the following community impacts? ☐ Noise ☐ Odors ☐ Aesthetics (for example, color, location, short or long term) ☐ Construction impacts (for example, disruption of daily patterns, dust, fumes, night work, property damage) ☐ Future, ongoing/long term impacts (for example, new facilities) ☐ Future level of service (for example, add capacity) ☐ Rates	
	Total checks from Section 1:	**Total number of checks X 6 = Score**	
2	**Political environment**	☐ Are there political sensitivities to be considered? ☐ Do you anticipate challenges with inter-jurisdictional coordination issues?	
	Total checks from Section 2:	**Total number of checks X 5 = Score**	
3	**Magnitude, duration, location:**	☐ Is the project a new site or facility? ☐ From start to finish, is the project going to last more than six months? ☐ Is the project work outside the boundaries of an existing King County facility? ☐ Is the project area in an environmentally sensitive location? ☐ Is the project near schools, business districts, homes, major thoroughfares, private property, historical sites, parks, etc.?	
	Total checks from Section 3:	**Total number of checks X 4 = Score**	

Figure 3-2 continued

4	**Drivers for public involvement**	☐ Are there public involvement activities required by legal environmental processes? (for example, NEPA/SEPA) ☐ Are there public involvement requirements associated with any permitting processes? (for example, street use, noise variance, work hours) ☐ Is there a King County acquisitions process that might require public involvement? (for example, easement, right of entry, condemnation, relocation, leases, off-site mitigation, fee sample) ☐ Are there King County Council or other local ordinances or policies requiring public involvement activities?	
	Total checks from Section 4:	**Total number of checks X 3 = Score**	
5	**Previous community interactions**	☐ Has a public involvement plan or other public involvement work been done in the project area? ☐ Have there been problems with the facility? (for example, operational issues such as odors, traffic, overflows, noise)	
	Total checks from Section 5:	**Total number of checks X 3 = Score**	
6	**History (project, area, people)**	☐ Has there been or is there ongoing King County work on or near the facility? ☐ Have there been other construction projects that have had impacts on neighbors near the facility in the last five years? ☐ Are there other public projects planned or ongoing in the project area? ☐ Are there involved groups and citizens in the project area? ☐ Has there been news media interest?	
	Total checks from Section 6:	**Total number of checks X 1 = Score**	
	TOTAL CHECKS FROM ALL SECTIONS	**Enter total section scores from shaded boxes** →	

No apparent need for planned public involvement--Total score falls between 0 – 10 range

Low public involvement effort--Total score falls between 11 – 50 range

Medium/high public involvement effort--Total score falls between 51 – 101 range

Completing an INA assigns a numerical value to the needs of the work. Those numerical values are assigned to ranges that dictate the level of effort needed for public involvement. It is important to note that no checklist or mathematical equation can or should substitute for the professional judgment and experience of staff members. The INA is only a guidance tool that helps staff look at a project or program through a coarse filter to determine public involvement needs.

In the INA, the individual drivers for public involvement include legally-mandated activities. However, determinations of legal requirements are conducted separately by environmental planners and right-of-way and permitting agents. The INA is designed to identify coordination points and interfaces with these legally-mandated activities that should be addressed in the public involvement planning process.

A project manager should ask a community relations planner to review a proposed public involvement scope of work to include in a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an upcoming project. The planner should conduct an INA to determine if the proposed scope of work in the RFP is adequate for the needs of the project.

Once the INA is completed, the next step on the public involvement flow chart is determined. The first possible pathway is "No apparent need for planned public involvement."

Path 1 - No apparent need for planned public involvement

WTD staff constantly interact with the public in the course of doing business. This path indicates there is no need for a separate public involvement planning effort for projects that have been determined to have almost no impacts to any members of the public or stakeholders or for those situations in which a standard operating procedure is already in place to address the situation. An example of this type of project might be a pump replacement, inside a pump station, that is in an isolated area of the county, with no neighbors, and no likely impacts from construction. Another example might be maintenance work on a piece of equipment that is inside a treatment plant.

Even when following this path, the project must be evaluated periodically to ensure that no planned public involvement is needed. The project must be monitored, and if at any time something arises that may dictate the need for public involvement, then the project should be moved to a new path (low or mid-to-high level of public involvement) and the appropriate steps should be followed. It may be necessary to repeat the initial needs assessment if the community relations planner believes conditions have changed enough to warrant moving to a different level of effort.

Path 2 - Low level of public involvement effort needed.

This pathway is for projects that are determined to have some potential impacts, but a high level of complexity or controversy is not expected. By identifying the affected stakeholders and by using the INA to identify potential concerns and impacts, the community relations planner should have gathered enough information to develop a public involvement plan. A public involvement plan must be developed to tie public involvement objectives to activities and to communicate those to the project team. An abbreviated public involvement plan is used to put

together the public involvement strategy for this level of effort. A public involvement plan consists of public involvement goals, objectives, audiences, and tools and activities.

For a complete understanding of how a public involvement plan is tied together, the reader should read through all of Section 3 before attempting to design a public involvement plan. Once the abbreviated plan is completed, community relations staff, in consultation with the project manager, should determine how to staff the public involvement task.

It must be emphasized that a project may be identified as requiring a low public involvement effort initially, but factors may emerge that would cause the level of effort to be escalated. The early work on a project may require a low level of effort, but a community relations planner may need to reevaluate the approach based on initial contact with the public.

Factors may develop that push the project to a higher level of public involvement during any stage of the project. These factors can include additional complexities in the project; emergence of a concerned or resistant group of stakeholders or community members; or unanticipated political sensitivities. Community relations staff must constantly monitor projects that are on this path, to ensure it is still the appropriate path.

Additionally, selecting a low level of effort as the chosen path does not indicate a project has a low level of importance. All work of WTD is important, as are all community members and stakeholders. Choosing the low level of effort path means only that, as currently assessed, project factors do not indicate a need for a more intense public involvement process in order to achieve successful project implementation. At no time, regardless of the level of effort, should community relations or project staff assume that public involvement efforts or project work are unimportant.

Path 3 - Medium-to-high level of public involvement effort needed.

When the INA shows the project, plan or program requires a medium-to-high level of effort, the third path is followed. As with the previous two paths, affected stakeholders, public and interested individuals will have already been identified. When this level of effort is indicated, it is because the project, plan or program has a high potential for complexity, controversy or a need for substantial involvement by the affected audiences.

Referring again to the Bleikers' philosophy, WTD work that fits into this public involvement path is more likely to be vulnerable to community pressure; in other words, it can be more difficult to successfully implement. For that reason, it is important to more fully define the public involvement needs of the work and develop a plan that will address those needs.

4. Define Public Involvement Resources

Because this level of effort will require significant public involvement resources, the next step, once the initial needs assessment is completed, is to define the resources needed for the public

involvement effort. The community relations planner will use the results of the INA to engage the program or project manager in a resources discussion.

It is at this point that decisions about budget, scope and internal versus external resources will be made. The planner must consult with the community relations lead and supervisor to consider internal capacity and ability to support the project. Planners may, at this point, be asked to review proposed consultant scopes and budgets. Also at this point, a roles and responsibilities discussion must occur. This discussion will determine what role the community relations planner will play through the life of the project, and at what (if any) point the consultant becomes involved in conducting public involvement activities. It is useful to include an environmental planner and a right-of-way and permitting agent in the discussions to define areas of overlap and coordination (e.g., public notification or property owner interactions).

5. Full Needs Assessment

Overview

The full needs assessment is the process that helps a planner determine how to develop a strategic public involvement plan that is designed to address the public involvement needs of the project. Unfortunately, in some agencies, public involvement planning is considered an add-on, have-to-do exercise that does not add real value to the project. Too often, public involvement efforts are determined by the "we've always done it this way" method. In a project or program requiring medium to high-level of effort, that is not an acceptable practice.

By performing the full needs assessment, the planner can develop effective objectives, identify the areas of concern in the affected community or project area, and select public involvement tools and activities that are shown, over time, to be effective in addressing those issues and concerns. Those objectives and the selected tools and activities are then captured in the written public involvement plan.

The needs assessment is the tool that helps the project or planning team learn about the community's objections, concerns, or issues; level of understanding of a project; and the history that preceded the project. All of this is necessary to develop a public involvement plan that will help the WTD team successfully move forward with the project.

In WTD, the full needs assessment process is based on the theory of *Systematic Development of Informed Consent* for government projects. Key to this theory is the Bleiker Life Preserver for public involvement. The tenets of the life preserver are:

- There is a serious problem or opportunity that must be addressed.
- This agency is the right agency to address this problem or opportunity; in fact, it would be irresponsible not to address the problem or opportunity.
- The agency has developed an approach that is reasonable, sensible and feasible.

- The agency is aware that the solution may cause inconvenience, hardship or other problems; is listening to its stakeholders; and truly cares about its stakeholders.

The Bleikers' theory of *Systematic Development of Informed Consent* states that if an agency successfully applies and demonstrates these four tenets to their stakeholders, then the agency will be able to successfully implement its plans and projects. When stakeholders or members of the public question a project, or attempt to block it, their resistance can be traced back to one or more of these four elements. Fundamentally, according to the Bleikers, resistance occurs when people believe their values have not been considered, or their values have been compromised by the agency. The full needs assessment is the tool that identifies where there is potential for resistance or concern and whether the public's values are being considered and incorporated into decision-making.

Conducting a Full Needs Assessment

The full needs assessment is accomplished by the planning or project team, including the public involvement planner, asking a series of questions based on the four tenets of the life preserver. The questions are designed to determine if any of the tenets are not fully understood, accepted or believed by affected stakeholders. If lack of acceptance or lack of understanding is identified, then tools and activities are selected for the public involvement strategy based on which tenet(s) needs to be emphasized.

For the needs assessment to succeed in identifying the objectives of the public involvement effort, it is essential that the questions be answered fully. If the team or community relations planner believes a yes answer is warranted, then the yes answer should be discussed. The planner should take some time to probe the answers and get the details. This full needs assessment is a tool to encourage team members to really think about the project or plan, and really think about all the various groups, individuals and stakeholders whose concurrence is needed in order to implement the work. Additionally, involving the project team in the full needs assessment will help non-public involvement practitioners (technical staff) understand the rationale and the specific drivers for the public involvement strategy.

The full needs assessment should be considered an exercise in the early stages of a project or program that enables the team to look at the project from the macro level and the micro level. In other words, it helps the project team understand what the project looks like from both the regional perspective and the neighborhood perspective. It will also help the team understand and address considerations related to age, language, and socioeconomic characteristics of the target audiences.

Unlike the initial needs assessment, the full needs assessment is not formulaic. The full needs assessment guides the practitioner in developing goals and objectives for the public involvement plan. Then, by following these guidelines, a list of tools and activities can be developed to meet the specific objectives. Certain tools and activities have been demonstrated to work better than others to meet specific objectives. Figure 3-3 is a table of the four life preserver elements and associated questions designed to identify if there are problems in any of the four areas.

Figure 3-3

Full Needs Assessment	
Life Preserver Element	**Questions**
1. There is a serious problem or opportunity that must be addressed.	• Are there some affected people who do not understand that this project addresses a serious problem or opportunity? • Are there some affected people who do not understand that their quality of life will suffer if this problem does not get addressed? • Are WTD, project staff and the affected publics convinced that doing this work makes sense, in light of current public-sector priorities, budget problems, etc.? • Do any of the affected publics think WTD's reasons for doing this work are phony, insincere, illegitimate or otherwise flawed?
2. WTD is the right one to address the problem – it would be irresponsible not to.	• Are there those who don't believe WTD is the right agency to undertake this project? • Are there those who don't understand the WTD mission adequately? • Are there those who don't understand that it would be irresponsible of WTD, given WTD's mission, not to undertake this project?
3. WTD's approach is reasonable, sensible and responsible.	• Are there those who don't understand the problem-solving and decision-making process WTD is using in this work? • Are there those who don't understand what analysis has been done, what issues have been considered, who has been involved and how they have been involved? • Are there those who don't understand what WTD's current thinking is, what issues and options WTD is considering? • Are there those who don't know what's next, how they will be involved? • Does anyone believe that WTD's decision-making process is unfair, exceeds WTD's authority, or fails to fulfill WTD's responsibility?

Figure 3-3 continued

4. Getting all the affected publics to understand WTD is listening and does care about costs, negative effects, and hardships that WTD's actions may cause people.	• Are there those who don't believe WTD cares about their views, values or concerns? • Are there those who don't believe WTD is doing everything within reason it can, without compromising its mission, to minimize negative impacts? • Are there those who don't realize that WTD is listening? • Are there those who don't understand that, while WTD is soliciting input, this is not a voting situation? • Are there those who don't understand that WTD must be and will be responsive and responsible?

The full needs assessment ensures the planner gets the "big picture" look at the project or plan and the associated public involvement needs. Once that groundwork has been laid, then the public involvement plan can be developed.

Appendix A includes a case study that demonstrates how a full needs assessment can be conducted and how it leads to well defined public involvement objectives and tools.

6. Develop Public Involvement Plan

The public involvement plan is where all the steps of the public involvement flow chart are combined. The plan becomes the guidance document for the public involvement practitioner. It is the final preparatory step to accomplish before actually implementing the strategic public involvement activities. The plan is constructed from the work done along the steps of the flow chart, and cannot be completed without the prior work. The public involvement plan is based on and expands the information gained along those steps.

Using the information gained from the project definition, stakeholder identification, the initial and the full needs assessment, a planner will develop the detailed elements of the public involvement plan. Figure 3-4 presents the steps to be followed in order to prepare a public involvement plan that will successfully support a project or program.

Figure 3-4

Steps in Preparing a Public Involvement Plan	
Information needed for the public involvement plan	**How the information fits into the plan**
Define the public involvement plan goal	State how the public involvement plan will support the project or program goal.
List the public involvement plan objectives	Develop general public involvement objectives based on the results of the full needs assessment.
Develop information about potentially affected interests • Identify "key" publics • Consider making initial community contacts to assess the range of individuals who may want to get involved and their issues and concerns	Identify targeted audiences and communications protocol.
Conduct upfront issues analysis • Identify the likely major issues • Evaluate overall implementation challenges and prospects • Identify actions that could improve public acceptance • Determine if there are County Executive or Council interests at stake	Use the results of the issues analyses to define key messages and items that need to be addressed by public information and outreach activities.
Develop a concept for the public involvement plan • How can/should this project be influenced by the public? • What do you need to learn from the public? • How and when will decisions be made? • How will public input be used? • At what points in the project is public input relevant? • What do participants need to know to contribute effectively? • What do you hope to accomplish with the public? (Understanding? Acceptance?)	Answer these questions to develop a concept for the plan, which will lead to selection of activities and tools. Use this information to select activities and tools to match the specific objectives. Carefully consider the goals and objectives when selecting tools and activities – is the activity intended to inform, to educate, to involve or to promote?

The **goal of the public involvement plan** is to support successful implementation of a project or program. To achieve that goal, the public involvement plan should be designed to achieve informed consent from the public – a necessity for a project or plan to be implemented. That is why the public involvement plan's objectives must be drawn from the full needs assessment. It is often helpful to define specific public involvement objectives for the various phases of a project (for example, predesign, design, construction, operation.)

The usual **audience for a WTD public involvement plan** is the project or program team. The plan demonstrates to all members of the team the need for public involvement; shows the key points where coordination of technical work and public involvement work must occur; and

identifies the key stakeholders and other affected parties who must be considered at all times and phases of the program or project. Once the steps in Figure 3-4 are completed, and all the needed information is collected, the public involvement plan is drafted. Refer to Figure 3-5 for the elements of a WTD public involvement plan.

Figure 3-5

Elements of a WTD Public Involvement Plan

1. Goal of Public Involvement - *State how the public involvement plan will support the project or program goals.*

2. Public Involvement Objectives

General
These are overarching objectives that reflect the big-picture view of public involvement needs. Examples are: inform and educate the public about the need for the project, alternatives or solutions; or, respond to the concerns and issues of residents, organizations or businesses.

Objectives by Phase
These are developed through the full needs assessment and the public involvement planning process. They reflect specific needs of this project or program. They may be divided by phases, by milestones, or by some other delineating factor.

3. Target Audiences

A. Public
These include interested and potentially affected individuals or groups. It is often helpful to list the target audiences and describe in general terms the geographic boundaries of the outreach area.

B. Agencies and Local Jurisdictions
These are external agencies with jurisdictional or permitting authority for the project. Community relations planners are not the primary point of contact for many of these agencies and jurisdictions. The WTD project team member that is the primary point of contact should be listed, to help establish the communications protocol and coordinate the efforts of the entire team.

C. Internal Coordination (within King County DNRP)
A WTD project may need to coordinate public outreach efforts with other DNRP projects or activities that are being conducted in the same area. These projects and activities, along with the WTD primary point of contact, should be listed here.

4. Potential Concerns and Messages

A. Concerns Identified to Date
This section of the plan contains the issues, concerns and impacts identified in the initial needs assessment and the full needs assessment. These are community issues identified to date.

B. Emerging Issues
These are project or program elements that may have community relations implications in the future. These issues are still under discussion, or have not been developed yet.

C. Key Messages
These are the foundation of all communications with the public. The WTD's primary key message is protection of public health and the environment. Key messages help provide a context and emphasize the need for and the benefits of a project or program.

Figure 3-5 continued

5. Public Involvement Activities Tied to Phases - *This section of the plan lays out a roadmap of tools and activities, tied to project or program phases. It also identifies project team coordination points.* .

Dates	Project/Program Activity	Public Involvement / Outreach Activity	Notes
Ex. - August	*Drilling for core samples*	*Flier to explain drilling and discuss potential impacts*	*Distribute to project mail list*

A community relations planner or public involvement consultant must consult with the project team in order to complete the public involvement plan. Specifically, the community relations planner will work with the project team to develop **key messages**. These messages must support the project, WTD's mission, goals and values, and department and countywide missions, values and goals. When developing key messages, refer to the objectives and the results of the full needs assessment. The key messages are an important tool for the project. The messages should always be reiterated in printed materials and when speaking to the public. Key messages should also be used in any media work that occurs during the project. Key messages must be carefully considered and then used regularly by all team members for consistency and effectiveness.

The **emerging issues** section of the plan again serves a broader team purpose. Technical or other pending decisions are captured here, so they are not lost, and the team continues to consider the public involvement impacts of those future decisions. An example of an emerging issue would be possible need for work on a nearby facility, which has not been determined at the time the public involvement plan is developed.

The public involvement plan also captures **communications protocols** that all project team members will use. The protocols identify key point persons for communication with various agencies or departments. Identifying the communication point person and the associated project or program element can prevent gaps or overlaps in communication with external and internal agencies. The protocol also identifies, for the consultants, who the lead is in different areas (for example, the plan reflects that the WTD media planner is the lead for communications with the media). In some cases, this part of the plan may also include an emergency communication protocol, if the project team determines it is appropriate. This section of the plan can also be used as a central place to collect project team member contact information.

There are occasions when a program or project is conducting public involvement in accordance with federal or state environmental regulations. In such cases, the environmental planner or right-of-way and permitting agents are usually responsible for public notification. Community relations planners should coordinate with these team members and call out compliance with the

public notification/ involvement requirements as a public involvement objective. In this instance, regulations may require additional elements or activities that must be included in the public involvement plan. One of them is often a requirement that the plan's audience must include the general public. One item that must then be included in the plan is a public involvement point of contact and related contact information. Refer to Section 2 for a discussion of environmental policies and references to required public involvement activities and plans.

The selection of public involvement activities and tools should be linked to public involvement objectives (e.g., inform, obtain feedback, gather input). Activities and tools should be tied to project technical activities and schedule milestones. The tool kit contains detailed information that will support the selection of appropriate tools and the design of effective public meetings and workshops. The last section of Figure 3-5 contains a table that can be used to link technical and public involvement activities. A more detailed example can be found in the case study in Appendix A.

Public involvement plans should be flexible. A plan that is written in the early stages of a project or program may need to adapt to changes in the project over time. It must be continuously assessed and verified at different phases or milestones of a project or program to ensure assumptions and needs are still valid. Audiences may change, long-lived projects may encounter different political sensitivities along the way, or technical assumptions may change. When any of these (or any other factors) change, the plan must be reevaluated and adjusted as necessary. At times, it may even be necessary to return to the full needs assessment and run through the process again.

Review by the Project Team

Once the public involvement plan is ready in draft, it should be circulated to the project team for internal and external concurrence. This review should include technical consultants who will be working on the project. The public involvement plan will provide a roadmap for the entire project team, as well as communications protocols, so it is important that all team members have the opportunity to comment on it. This review formalizes the plan and ensures the project team will be aware of the need for integration between project activities and public involvement activities. Public involvement plans are often summarized and included in other project reports (such as predesign reports).

A written public involvement plan can be shared with other projects and programs to help coordinate efforts. This helps coordinate activities where possible. Besides capturing the factors that contributed to the development of the planned activities (audience identification, initial needs assessment, communications protocol, public involvement objectives, etc.), the public involvement plan serves as a mechanism to follow a project or plan through its various stages. It helps to maintain consistency, even as projects are handed from one team or section to another (i.e. hand-off from a design team to a construction team).

A completed public involvement plan is included as part of the case study in the appendix to Part 1 of the guidelines.

7. Implement Public Involvement Plan

Once the plan is developed, implementation begins. Tools and activities have been selected and scheduled. It is now time for either the community relations staff or a consultant (or some combination thereof), to actually use the tools and embark on the public involvement efforts.

Consider the technical schedule of the project to determine when it is appropriate to implement the activities in the public involvement plan.

It is critical to remember that successful public involvement is not a reactive strategy – it is proactive. Educating the public, gaining public trust, increasing public awareness, helping people find meaningful ways to provide their input, convincing the public that WTD is truly listening, and ensuring the public knows WTD honestly cares about their concerns will ensure successful implementation of projects.

The definitions and guidance in the *Public Involvement Tool Kit* will be invaluable for implementation. Suggestions of when tools should or should not be used can be applied at this step. Practical matters such as budget and use of external resources are discussed in Section 4. Remember that different tools require different lead times. Carefully consider those requirements, and coordinate them with the technical timing requirements. Accompanying these guidelines is a reference document with details about processes and procedures for many of the tools and activities discussed in the *Public Involvement Tool Kit*.

Projects are never static, nor do they often proceed exactly as planned. Public involvement plans cannot capture all eventualities. Community relations consultants cannot navigate the internal King County system and follow what happens during a project delay without assistance from community relations planners. It is these unanticipated events, complexities, and uncertainties that make a planner so valuable to a project or plan.

It is the community relations planner that provides the glue between the affected community, the consultants, the project team and the system.

A planner may need to hunt down a project manager to find out the cause of a delay. A planner may need to remind the project team that a promise was made to the community, and if that promise is not to be kept, then the community needs to know that – and why. A planner may need to visit residents along a project alignment (or direct the consultant to do so) to apply the personal touch that builds trust. The community relations planner is often considered the face of King County for a project or program. By acting as the public representative, the planner can contribute to developing trust and understanding for the County.

While this section has provided useful planning and implementation information, public involvement is not an exact science. There are many activities that cannot be measured, planned or captured in a public involvement flow chart.

What this means to the WTD community relations planner is that public involvement is a living, flexing, ongoing practice. Each project or program will have parts that are similar to others, and almost every project or plan will have differences and circumstances that have never been encountered before.

Through a combination of anticipating needs and concerns (needs assessment), knowing who will be affected and what their values are (stakeholder identification), planning for the different public involvement needs of a project or program according to phases or milestones, and matching the public involvement tools and activities to the various needs, the planner will be prepared to support any project, program or plan. That then must get overlaid with knowledge of how and when to vary the plan, to add, subtract or adjust the mix of tools, and to increase or decrease the resources being used.

And finally, the planner must always remember that public involvement is about people, with all their worries, mixed values, inconsistencies and concerns. Putting that all together is how public involvement gets implemented.

8. Ongoing Assessment

During implementation, the community relations staff must constantly monitor the project and the public involvement plan for emerging issues, new stakeholders or affected public entering the project, transitions between phases of work or major milestones. The plan should call out critical coordination points with other disciplines, such as right-of-way and permitting, but the community relations planner must be alert to those, and watch for coordination points that might have been missed during the plan development.

Additionally, through the life of a project, issues or players may shift and require additional attention or changed strategies to ensure public involvement objectives continue to be met. If, at any time, it appears the public involvement objectives are not being met, or they seem to be changing, the community relations planner must drive the team back to the full needs assessment, to ensure priority objectives are still valid and the right tools and activities are being implemented to meet those objectives. For suggestions on evaluating ongoing progress and success of the public involvement plan, refer to Section 5.

9. Project Closeout & Evaluation

When a project or program comes to a close, it is essential to mark the ending and perform an evaluation. The community relations planner should take the time to gather a complete file of all the public involvement communications and products that were produced through the life of the project. The public involvement database should be updated with any final information. Developing a complete record of the public involvement efforts, and filing in the central files, will provide a valuable resource for the next project or program that overlaps the project area or affected community.

A closeout evaluation can be done to provide feedback on the community's perception of the effectiveness of the public involvement plan. Community relations planners and consultants may be asked to participate in a lessons learned meeting. This meeting is an opportunity to reflect on how the public involvement plan was integrated and coordinated with the larger project and identify areas of improvement for future projects.

For more specific details about evaluations, refer to Section 5.

Section 4 – Resources (Internal and External)

Identifying and using the right combination of internal and external resources enables community relations planners to achieve public involvement goals. Open, effective communications and public involvement are among the key elements that keep projects on schedule and within budget. This section establishes a process to identify and obtain resources to successfully implement a public involvement plan.

To execute a public involvement plan, consideration should be given to the following resources: staff time, budget and materials. After completing the initial needs assessment and public involvement plan exercises described in Section 3, the next step is identifying and obtaining the resources needed to successfully put the plan into action. Section 4 leads the community relations planner through this process.

This section includes the following information:

1. Defining Basic Resource Requirements for a Project
2. Identifying Resources
3. Obtaining Consultant Support
4. Project Initiation and Implementation
5. Project Completion and Closeout

1. DEFINING BASIC RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR A PROJECT

As discussed in Section 2, the provider of public involvement services, the planner, is an active member of the project team with expertise in strategic public involvement planning and implementation. While other team members should be aware and involved in public involvement activities on some level, the community relations planner's role is to help them be most efficient and effective with their time. The planner will oversee and lead the implementation of the public involvement plan that was developed in Section 3. The planner will work with the project team to assess the following elements and their potential to impact project progress to the attention of the team:

- Potential community impacts (positive or negative)
- Political environment
- Magnitude, duration, location
- Drivers for public involvement
- Previous public involvement efforts
- History (project, area, people).

Key considerations when making staffing decisions

When determining the appropriate resources to carry out the public involvement plan, the first step is to explore the internal County resources, including how much management time and budget are available and if the right resources are on hand for the duration of the project. Leading the team through the initial public involvement planning process will help the planner determine if there is internal capacity to undertake the appropriate level of public involvement effort, or if staffing resources must be procured externally.

If the project is large, scheduled to last a long time, especially complicated, or affects an extensive area with a variety of constituents, there may be a need for outside consultant services. If a project is small or more routine and requires less constant or intensive community support, either staff or consultants on an on-call contract can be used.

County staff will be needed to manage consultant support. Consultants should be under the direction of community relations staff in coordination with the project manager or project representative. Ideally, King County community relations staff should provide support for all WTD projects. However, staff time demands must be balanced with WTD's other public outreach needs.

Also consider the cost to the project; consultants cost more than in-house staff because direct labor costs are marked up to cover overhead costs and fee. Usually, the County hires consultants to support public involvement activities for two major reasons:

- To obtain additional capacity when there is not enough staff in-house
- To obtain special expertise not available within the County (for example, neutral facilitation, survey research)

The development and distribution of public involvement materials can be time intensive. Consideration should be given to what type of tools and activities (*Public Involvement Tool Kit*) will be used during the project and whether sufficient in-house time and expertise are available to develop and produce written materials and handle the logistics of public meetings. County policy requires that graphic design and printing be performed or arranged in-house.

Roles and responsibilities of King County staff

Once the need for consultant support is identified, the role of the County versus that of consultant staff should be considered. King County staff should do the following:

- Determine the amount and type of public involvement required for a project
- Produce, review or approve public involvement materials (both for content and compliance with County standards)
- Respond to community complaints or overflows
- Facilitate claims processing and address liability issues
- Lead direct public interactions in politically sensitive situations
- Inform WTD management of sensitive issues
- Post information to County web sites
- Coordinate media relations activities.
- Provide graphic design and printing services for all projects.

Roles and responsibilities of consultants

The consultant's role should include the following:

- Special services (facilitation, survey research)
- Drafting written materials for approval by County staff
- Providing logistical support for meetings, distribution of information materials and other public outreach activities
- Direct contact with the public, as directed by the community relations planner.

2. IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

While forming the project team, staff and material resources that may require special expertise and skills must be identified. Use of internal King County resources should be considered before hiring a consultant or vendor. The King County DNRP Public Affairs Office has developed Public Outreach and Communications Guidelines, February 2002, which are available on the DNRP Intranet site. These guidelines help ensure that WTD's outreach and communication efforts are integrated with the DNRP's and King County's overall communication efforts. For example, the County has internal staff resources available with specialized expertise in media relations. The WTD media relations planner provides valuable expertise in the area of media relations, including setting standards for writing, sending news releases and providing information to key reporters at various media outlets throughout the county. The community relations planner should consult with the WTD media relations planner about developing a media relations strategy for a project and drafting news releases. The WTD media relations coordinator coordinates with the DNRP Public Affairs Office before finalizing and sending out any media materials, such as news releases and advertisements.

County policy requires that internal graphics and printing resources be used for all projects. Using internal resources is often more cost-effective and can help ensure compliance with County logo and graphic standards and guidelines. The DNRP Intranet site contains copies of the logo and graphic guidelines and instructions for how to use internal graphics services. The *Public Involvement Resource Guide* also contains helpful tips.

Another example of in-house expertise is the King County Department of Transportation Sign Shop, which can produce customized signs for projects, and King County graphics and printing services.

Internal resources should be used if readily available; however, consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise to fulfill the needs of a public involvement plan. For example, specialized expertise may be needed to perform a survey or conduct focus group research. These activities are designed, conducted and analyzed by trained market research professionals who can help the planner obtain statistically valid or unbiased information for making key project decisions. Frequently, the County also hires consultants to facilitate advisory committees.

3. OBTAINING CONSULTANT SUPPORT

Once the need to hire external resources or consultants is established, there are several ways to procure communications and public involvement services. These include using the existing WTD on-call community relations contract and subcontracting through a consultant or construction management contract.

Procurement through the on-call contract

The on-call work order contract is an established contract vehicle available through WTD's community relations group. This procurement vehicle is put in place for a specific period and is designed to facilitate the quick and easy hiring of a consultant for public involvement services.

The on-call contract has a start and end date as well as a ceiling on the overall expenditures within those dates (for example, three-year contract with a $200,000 budget ceiling). The on-call contract also has set labor rates, overhead rate and fee. Within that contract, the on-call consultant firm can provide a full range of communications and public involvement services.

Three factors should be considered when using the existing on-call contract:
- Duration of the project and its public involvement activities and tools
- Whether the project is going to be designed in-house or will have a consultant team which could include a community relations consultant
- Cost estimates of the public involvement activities and tools.

Check with the on-call contract representative for the particulars about the existing on-call contract and its specific time and budget requirements.

Once it has been determined that a project's needs fall within the time constraints of the on-call contract, the community relations planner must prepare a draft work order for public involvement services. If necessary, the on-call contract representative can provide assistance. The work order includes the following elements:

<u>A. Nature of Services Under this Work Order</u>
This section should include a brief project description and a definition of the public involvement or community relations services that are proposed. For example:

> *Contractors are finishing up the last phase of work on the sewer improvement project to install a larger sewer trunk line and replace an undersized section of pipe. Weather has contributed to the delays in completion of the project, which was originally scheduled for December 2001. This work order is to provide community relations services until project closeout, anticipated in May 2002.*

<u>B. Scope of Services under This Work Order</u>
The Scope of Services refers to specific tasks, including the activities and tools, that will be provided under the work order. It should include direction on materials and distribution methods to be used. For example:
- *Conduct one open house,*
- *Respond to 24/7 hotline pager inquiries, document all contacts in log sheet,*
- *Prepare and distribute mailings to the neighborhood on projects and*
- *Provide updates to key stakeholders in the neighborhood.*

<u>C. Budget for the Work Order</u>
The budget for the work order should include labor rates, including overhead rate and fee, and other direct costs such as printing, distribution and mileage, as established in the contract. The following language should be present on all work orders:
- *Budget (The proposed budget is attached to this work order.)*
- *Rates billed are shown in the contract.*

- *Bills will be submitted to the County coordinator of community relations or designated representative.*
- *The County reserves the discretion to amend the budget for this work order.*

D. Duration of the Work Order

The duration of the work order should be specified with the following language:

> *This work order will begin upon signature by both the County and the consultant and shall terminate on (insert date), unless extended or terminated earlier, pursuant to the terms and condition of the Contract.*

E. Signature Block for the County and Consultant

The work order must be signed by the County's on-call contract manager and by an authorized person with the consulting firm under the on-call contract.

Procurement through a project-specific consultant or construction management contract

The other means to obtaining public involvement services involves hiring a subconsultant as part of a project-specific consultant or construction management contract. The first step in this method of procuring consultant services is to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP is the document that calls for the approach and qualifications of interested consulting firms to provide specific services. The RFP should present the complete scope of work for the project, including the scope of work for anticipated public involvement activities.

If communications or public involvement services are being obtained from a firm that is a subcontractor under a general consultant or general construction contract, the community relations planner will need to supply the project manager with the public involvement scope of work to include in the RFP. The scope of work should be based on initial needs assessment (described in Section 3). The initial needs assessment will help determine the complexity and level of effort required for each project.

Guidelines and standards that the consultant is expected to follow should be identified in the RFP. Matching the needs of a project to the qualifications of a consultant can be accomplished by including specific language in the section of the RFP that describes the required consultant qualifications.

The project manager will lead the proposal evaluation, consultant interview and selection process. The community relations planner may or may not have a role in this process. The involvement of the planner in the consultant selection process is recommended if a project is expected to require a high level of public involvement.

Once the RFP submittals have been evaluated and the consultant team is selected, the community relations planner should assist the project manager in contract development and negotiations. In particular, the planner should offer guidance in developing the contract's scope of work for public involvement services. During contract negotiations, the planner may be required to review the public involvement portion of the scope of work and budget developed by the consultant (includes staffing, schedule, deliverables and assumptions).

Things to consider when reviewing a draft scope of work include:

- Consistency with the initial public involvement needs assessment
- Integration with project milestones (consider legal requirements for public involvement)
- Whether the community relations scope is included in one task or spread among various phases of the work
- Whether the scope extends through construction
- Timing of the full public involvement needs assessment
- Consistency with community relations guidelines
- Clear definition of deliverables
- Proposed staffing
  - Community relations staff: level of experience appropriate for job, key staff available
  - Inclusion of other staff to support community relations efforts (for example, landscape architect to produce renderings of facility)
  - Availability/need for prime contractor and other consultants to participate in public meetings, etc.

After the scope is finalized, it is time to assign value to the labor, materials and other direct costs. When deciding or assigning hours of labor, consider the level of effort for each deliverable or service proposed. If the scope includes public meeting activities, such as an open house or workshop, consider how much time is proposed to design, plan and staff the meeting, provide meeting materials and write a meeting summary.

Things to consider when reviewing a proposed budget:

- Total public involvement labor costs – verify that staff with the appropriate experience level will perform the activities defined in the scope (for example, do not pay senior staff to do support work)
- Which labor and other direct costs can or should be covered by in-house resources (e.g., printing, toll calls, producing and mounting display boards)
- County policies governing the use of outside services
- Budget covers everything identified in the scope
- Consultant's cost assumptions – evaluate the proposed costs and level of effort associated with
  - Each deliverable
  - Meeting attendance and staffing
  - Project management

Once a consultant has been hired, they become a member of the project team. Ongoing communications processes and protocols within the team should be established.

4. PROJECT INITIATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The project initiation stage provides the community relations planner an opportunity to define the roles and responsibilities of internal staff and external consultants. During project initiation,

lines of communication are established both within the team and with key stakeholders. These lines of communications provide the structure for a more efficient and effective operation. In addition, the planner can use this opportunity to identify internal audiences for public involvement materials, as required in the public involvement plan (Section 3).

Typically, the County project manager initiates a project by forming an internal team and establishing charge numbers, financial controls and file designations. Following the formation of the team, the project manager usually schedules and conducts a project team kick-off meeting to which all members, both internal and external, are invited.

The community relations planner is responsible for the following elements at the project kick-off meeting:

- Review initial needs assessment
- Provide copy of guidelines and standards to consultants
- Set expectations (coordination, communication, backup, etc.)
- Provide public involvement project execution guidelines
- Identify the community relations planner who will be an active member of project team
- Clarify and reinforce role of County staff versus consultant
- Look for opportunities to minimize costs (less people attend meeting, more efficient ways to do work)
- Discuss deliverables (direction, review, standards)
- Define process for progress reporting, invoicing and documentation (chronology in database)

During the implementation of the public involvement plan, the planner should ensure that the consultant provides copies of all final deliverables for project documentation purposes. Certain files could be linked to the public involvement database for future reference. See Section 6 for more information.

5. PROJECT COMPLETION AND CLOSEOUT

The steps taken to complete or close a project should be as deliberate as those taken to initiate it. In most cases, communities located near capital facilities or project areas can be affected on many occasions by more than one project, program or activity. After the project is complete, the public involvement consultant or County staff should provide a Community Relations Project Completion Report. This project history can provide future planners with valuable community information that enables the County to be a better neighbor by understanding the impacts that a community may have experienced because of prior County projects.

The report provides information about the complete history of the project, including project description, duration, key dates, community relations challenges, lessons learned and a public involvement chronology. The report should include the elements and table provided in the outline below.

Subject: Community Relations Project Completion Report, Project Name

1. Background

2. Project Duration
    1. Notice to proceed (issue date)
    2. Project completion notice (issues date)
3. Community Relations Challenges (for example, construction impacts, claims process, project delays)
4. Lessons Learned
5. Public Involvement Chronology

Dates	Project/Construction Activities	Community Relations Tools & Activities

Section 5 – Evaluation

The evaluation of public involvement programs and activities is essential. Just as it would be irresponsible to build and maintain a pumping station without regularly evaluating its performance, so too must a public involvement program be evaluated. It is not uncommon for public involvement needs to change over the life of a project. Assessing the effectiveness of a program will allow it to be fine tuned, as is appropriate, and will help to ensure that no opportunities for critical feedback or dissemination of important information are missed.

Tools for evaluating public involvement programs are described in the *Public Involvement Tool Kit*. However, the community relations planner should also informally monitor contacts with stakeholders to gauge their level of interest, comfort and responsiveness to public involvement efforts. Check sign-in sheets from public meetings and return addresses from comment cards – are the same players coming to every meeting? The public involvement program might need to be changed to attract broader participation. Watch for repetition of questions being asked – if the same questions are getting asked repeatedly, then information is not being communicated well. A planner should also evaluate the level of support given to a project to ensure that the County is using limited staff and resources efficiently.

This section is devoted to evaluating public involvement programs. The following pages will discuss why and how public involvement evaluations are conducted and describe some of the tools and techniques for accomplishing them. It will also provide guidance on how to use the results of an evaluation to change and improve existing and future efforts. Finally, it will give examples of some of King County's current evaluation practices and how the Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) uses and applies the results.

This section includes the following:

1. Definition and Purposes of Evaluation
2. Planning an Evaluation
3. Evaluation Tools
4. How to Use the Results of Evaluations
5. Examples in WTD

1. DEFINITION AND PURPOSES OF AN EVALUATION

Evaluation can be defined as the practice of carefully collecting information about a program or some aspect of a program in order to make decisions. Evaluation is not about proving the success or failure of a program. It is about gathering feedback on a continual basis and adjusting the program accordingly.

A public agency conducts program evaluations for a number of purposes. Outcome evaluations seek to understand, verify or increase the impact of services on customers. Other evaluations help to improve delivery mechanisms, allowing a program to be more effective and less costly.

Finally, evaluations verify that a program is accomplishing what it was originally intended to do.[2]

2. PLANNING AN EVALUATION

Planning an effective program evaluation begins with defining its purpose. The purpose of an evaluation will have a great deal of influence over the tools and techniques used to accomplish it. Evaluations are commonly used to:

- Perform needs assessment
- Evaluate trends
- Measure effectiveness
- Gather lessons learned

Defining the audience for the information gathered in the evaluation is the next step. Will the audience be external to WTD, such as King County Council, customers or ratepayers? Or will WTD management, a project team or the community relations group, use the results of the evaluation internally? Determining the audience of an evaluation not only affects how the results are presented, but also it shapes what kinds of results are sought in the first place.

After defining the audience, the type of information needed to conduct the evaluation must be determined. Some questions to consider include:

- Does the information need to be numerical or anecdotal?
- If numerical information is required, must it be statistically valid?
- How large a sample is necessary to collect meaningful data?
- Does information need to be attributed to specific individuals for follow- up at a later time?
- Will the information collected potentially affect County policies or procedures?

The answers to these questions lead to choosing tools and techniques that achieve the evaluation's desired purpose. If numerical data is necessary, a planner might elect to do a public opinion survey. This tool ensures that data gathered is statistically accurate or can be presented in numerical format with a certain level of confidence. Tools such as questionnaires or case studies may not provide that level of numerical validation, but do give personal detail about customer experience of a project or program.

The final steps in planning an evaluation include deciding how it will be conducted and determining the manner in which the results will be analyzed and reported. Detailed discussions of both of these topics are provided below.

[2] Carter McNamara, MBA, Ph.D., *Basic Guide to Program Evaluation*, February 16, 1998

3. EVALUATION TOOLS

A number of different evaluation tools are available, and are described in the *Public Involvement Tool Kit*. This section provides a brief overview of types of tools that are available.

Surveys are standardized written instruments that contain several questions about issues to be evaluated. Surveys can generate statistically accurate data and are often well suited for larger projects and programs. They involve rigorously structured mechanisms for gauging public sentiment in quantifiable terms. Surveys are usually developed by external survey research firms in order to obtain statistically valid results. Surveys are useful for evaluating the responses of a large number of people and forming statistical conclusions based on large volumes of data.

Interviews and focus groups can be conducted for a variety of purposes, including program evaluation. Both techniques produce qualitative information that is not statistically valid. They are particularly useful when in-depth information is desired. Information on interviews can be found in the outreach section of the *Public Involvement Tool Kit*, while information on focus groups can be found in the public meeting section of the *Public Involvement Tool Kit*.

Informal tools include things like questionnaires, interviews and lessons learned evaluations. They provide qualitative information. They are easy to create and they generate anecdotal or subjective responses. Informal evaluation tools can be implemented more quickly and inexpensively. As a result, they are often appropriate for smaller projects.

Questionnaires perform a function similar to a survey, but they do not need specialized expertise to develop. However, they tend to have a low response rate and may generate responses primarily from people with strong opinions. Lessons learned meetings are comprehensive internal reviews done at the completion of a project. They are multidisciplinary efforts that include all project phases and activities. They are particularly useful for developing successful project models for the future.

Data tracking is also a form of evaluation. The focus is on collecting data on the number of people attending a meeting, the number of comments received, or the number of staff hours spent on a given activity. Data tracking does not evaluate the results of a program.

4. HOW TO USE THE RESULTS OF EVALUATIONS

Once an evaluation has been completed, the results must be documented and compiled in a final report or analysis. When surveys are used, verify the statistical accuracy of the final results. The documentation should focus on what worked well in a particular public involvement effort and what elements of that effort contributed to the overall success of the project or program. In addition, the final report should give attention to recommended corrective actions for parts of the effort that were unsuccessful.

Once the results have been compiled, they should be reported to WTD management or any other audience defined in the planning phase of the evaluation. If the public or the media is part of the intended audience, results may be reported in several ways, such as news releases, web site updates, newsletters or post cards. Make sure that statistics are accompanied by sufficient

explanatory text and that all results are clearly worded. If the audience of the evaluation is internal, final evaluation results can be filed and saved in the WTD's central hard copy files and server (Section 6). This allows evaluations to be accessed by all staff for years to come.

At the end of each year, all public involvement evaluations may be gathered and analyzed collectively to give WTD management and the community relations group an annual overall summary of the entire community relations program. By having well-documented evaluations of all key projects and programs completed over the previous year, community relations staff will be able to develop an clear picture of the successes and lessons learned from the entire year's efforts.

5. EXAMPLES IN WTD

WTD currently employs a variety of evaluation tools to assess the performance of programs and projects within the division. These include the Annual Water Quality Survey, Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) reports, Productivity Initiative, customer and component agency surveys and questionnaires, activity evaluations and lessons learned/case studies. The final pages of this section will discuss WTD's ongoing evaluation efforts.

Annual Water Quality Survey
WTD's Annual Water Quality Survey is a random digital telephone survey used to evaluate King County residents' perceptions about water quality in the region. Other divisions within the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) participate in and use the results of this survey as well. The survey can be used as a source of background information on general public awareness about services the County provides. It is also a tool to gauge the general effectiveness of DNRP outreach. The results can be used by staff to develop better strategies to communicate with the public. In the past, specific questions relating to RWSP and the Brightwater project have been included in the Annual Water Quality Survey. Future surveys might be written to include questions about these or other WTD projects, if schedule permits.

RWSP Reports
King County Ordinance 13680 (or KCC 28) requires WTD to write semi-annual reports on RWSP implementation to the Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) and the King County Council. The ordinance also requires that a comprehensive review of the RWSP be conducted every three years beginning in 2003. Public involvement performance measures are evaluated as part of the three-year review. These measures correlate to the specific public involvement policies mentioned in Section 2. The reports are presented to the RWQC, Council and interested members of the public to inform them of how RWSP implementation is progressing.

Productivity Initiative
The Productivity Initiative is a comprehensive long-range effort to improve how WTD delivers its products and services to the public. It began in 2000 with the goal of making WTD competitive with other municipal wastewater utilities in 10 years and private wastewater utilities in 20 years. As part of the Productivity Initiative, the Balanced Scorecard is a tool for WTD to monitor its performance by studying and balancing four elements of its operations: financial,

internal processes, customer satisfaction and people management. The customer satisfaction element of the Balanced Scorecard includes surveys to evaluate component agency satisfaction, internal and external customer satisfaction and neighborhood satisfaction.

The Productivity Initiative, and other evaluation efforts at the program and project levels, improve quality and provide accountability to managers, elected officials and ratepayers.

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Section 6 – Information Management

Documentation of public involvement activities and contacts is a critical element of any project or program. The benefits of information management include:

- Easy access to recorded information
- Quick and easy filing and retrieval
- Compliance with government record keeping laws (King County, State of Washington, federal)
- Timely, thorough responses to public disclosure requests
- Minimum of wasted time and effort
- Uniform practices
- Easy identification/purging of inactive records
- Higher staff efficiency and productivity
- Less likelihood of litigation

This section discusses the legal requirements for record keeping and public disclosure, and the types of information that should be collected and managed by community relations planners.

This section includes the following information:
1. Legal Requirements
2. WTD Project Management and Financial Forecasting Database
3. Quick Tips

1. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Maintenance of public records
By law, public agencies are required to keep and maintain public records (RCW 40.14). As defined by law, the term 'public records' includes:

> "any paper, correspondence, completed form, bound record book, photograph, film, sound recording, map drawing, machine-readable material, compact disc meeting current industry ISO specifications, or other document, regardless of physical form or characteristics, and including such copies thereof, that have been made by or received by any agency of the state of Washington in connection with the transaction of public business, and legislative records as described in RCW 40.14.100."[3]

The state has developed records management guidelines for local government agencies of Washington State.[4] According to these guidelines, records have legal value as long as they provide enforceable documentation of the agency's rights and obligations. Some records, such as governing council minutes, ordinances and resolutions, have permanent legal value. The legal value of other records, such as contracts and agreements, is limited by the time they remain in

[3] Chapter 40.14 RCW, *Preservation and Destruction of Public Records.*
[4] Office of the Secretary of State, Division of Archives and Records Management, *Local Government Agencies of Washington State, Records Management Guidelines*, June 2001.

effect plus the statute of limitations on the agency's liability for the terms and conditions they document. Thus, the standard retention period for contracts and agreements is termination plus six years.

Public disclosure of information and data
King County is legally obligated to respond to requests for public records under the provisions of the Washington State Public Disclosure Law.[5] Typically, most requests for information are routine requests made by members of the public for information or data that has already been made widely available. Community relations planners should handle these requests promptly (usually within 48 hours), and keep a log of the date, name, subject matter and date of final response.

On occasion, a community relations planner (or other WTD team member) may receive a request for information or documents that is not readily available. If this situation arises, or if there is any question about what is actually being requested, the requestor should be asked to put the request in writing and the community relations planner should inform the DNRP Public Disclosure Officer immediately. Time is of the essence, because the county is legally required to make an initial response to the requestor within five days of receipt. DNRP has developed guidelines for responding to requests for information and data, which are contained in the *Public Involvement Resource Guide.*[6]

File management within WTD
WTD project managers and construction project representatives keep central files on all aspects of a project. Community relations planners should provide copies of all final deliverables and products, as described below, to the WTD project manager and representative for inclusion in their central project files.

The WTD Environmental Planning and Community Relations Unit also keeps central files. Community relations planners should become familiar with the filing procedures within the unit. Not all materials a community relations planner may choose to keep belong in the central files. All public records should be kept in the central files. Handwritten notes and draft documents should not be kept in the central files. As a rule of thumb, all documents kept by a planner should be part of the central files, and a duplicate set of files should not be kept. Public records are subject to public disclosure whether they are s in a central file or a file of a government employee.

The following types of information should be kept in the community relations central files:

- Public involvement plan
- Correspondence with any outside entity (public, local, state and federal), including printed copies of e-mails
- Records of verbal communications, such as telephone logs or construction hotline logs
- All printed materials produced for the public by King County.

[5] King County Administrative Policies and Procedures, Executive Orders, Policies & Procedures, *Requests for Disclosure of Public Records*, Effective November 9. 1992.
[6] King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Director's Office, *Guidelines for Responding to Requests for Information/Data*, January 2, 2001.

- Summaries of public meetings
- Transcripts of public hearings (originals are kept in the central files of the Right-of-way and Permitting Unit or environmental planning if they pertain to permitting or State Environmental Policy Act [SEPA]/ State Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] documents)
- Completed comment sheets and written comments
- Meeting sign-in sheets
- Media relations activities, such as news articles, news releases, advertisements, etc.
- Photographs of a project
- Speeches given by any King County official or staff members

After construction is complete, files are sent to bulk storage, where they are kept for several years. The rule of thumb for project files is that they are kept seven years after the construction of the project is complete and the project contract is closed out.

2. WTD PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL FORECASTING DATABASE

The WTD Project Management and Financial Forecasting Database contains two modules dedicated to community relations. These modules include the public contacts module and the public involvement activities module.

The contacts module provides a central way to manage contact information for members of the public, component agency staff, businesses, interest group or any one else who is interested or involved in a WTD project or activity. This searchable database allows contact information to be cross-referenced by WTD project or facility.

Contact information is generated in a number of ways, including direct contacts and meeting attendee lists. Tracking and updating this information enables WTD staff to develop and maintain relationships over time, and also enhances the efficiency and productivity of public outreach efforts.

The activities module provides a chronology of public involvement activities conducted over the course of a project. This information is particularly useful for coordination of activities in the same area and use in planning future outreach efforts.

Community relations planners should review the users' manual for the community relations database and ensure information is entered into the database as a project progresses.[7] Maintaining up to date information provides WTD staff with easy access to project information. The information in the database should be considered a public record and should be entered concisely and accurately.

[7] King County Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks, Wastewater Treatment Division, *Community Relations Database, Users Guide – For Windows 1.2*, August 2002.

3. QUICK TIPS

A large volume of information is often gathered during the course of a public involvement effort. The following tips may be useful in managing specific types of information.

E-mail retention
More and more WTD is relying on e-mail. However, many people do not realize that e-mail is considered a public record whether it is in a printed or electronic format. E-mails are subject to the same laws that govern written records. Currently the County relies on a paper record keeping system. Therefore, e-mail messages should be printed out and placed in the appropriate file. [8] A good rule of thumb is to print out any e-mail message that meets the description of a public record and delete those that are not relevant.

Consultant documentation
Consultants may be responsible for completing large portions of a public involvement program. If this is the case, the community relations planner should obtain final copies of all consultant-produced materials. These could include printed materials, public meeting displays, surveys, meeting summaries, reports or phone logs. As soon as a product is finalized, the consultant should deliver several final hard copies to the planner. WTD staff is responsible for filing the materials according to WTD standards.

If consultants interact directly with the public, they should submit original copies of all public correspondence directly to the County. The planner should set up process for this exchange of information at project initiation.

Other records of interest to community relations staff
Other parts of the WTD maintain records that may be of interest to community relations staff. These include logs of interaction with the public at various King County facilities and construction sites. Examples include:

- Odor complaint records maintained by treatment plants
- Citizen contact logs maintained by construction project representatives
- Public hearing or hearing examiner transcripts maintained by the right-of-way and permitting staff
- Public notices and other documentation related to the NEPA and SEPA processes maintained by environmental planning staff

A community relation planner may request copies of these records, and include them in the community relations files for a specific project or program. However, it is not recommended that two separate files containing the same information be kept.

[8] King County Dept. of Executive Services, Records, Elections and Licensing Services Division, Archives and Records Management, *Quick Tips: E-mail Retention Issues*, August 27, 2001.

APPENDIX A: FREDERICK COVE CASE STUDY

In the following pages, a fictional case study demonstrates how a community relations planner followed the steps in the public involvement flow chart to develop a public involvement plan for a pump station upgrade. The case study includes a stakeholder list, a completed needs assessment and a public involvement plan.

Define the Project

The project is a pump station upgrade at the Frederick Cove pump station. The pump station is undersized for the flow it is currently handling and does not have enough capacity to manage growth in the community. The force main from the pump station to the Westside Interceptor is suspect and may need to be upgraded as well. From predesign to construction, the project is expected to take three years to complete. The project is currently in predesign. The pump station is in a residential area, across the street from a park. The City of Frederick Cove was incorporated only two years ago. The pump station is in the city limits, but part of the service area falls outside of the city within a local utility district's jurisdiction.

Identify Affected Stakeholders

The following stakeholders, interested groups and members of the public may be affected by this project: residents, Frederick Cove Elementary School, parents of elementary school students, property managers of a nearby condominium complex, Frederick Cove park users, local businesses, north Frederick Cove Homeowner's Association, a group called Save Frederick Cove's Riparian Zone Association, the Frederick Cove Stream Team, staff from the City of Frederick Cove, city elected officials and the Southshore Utility District.

Initial Needs Assessment

The initial needs assessment was done, and because of the residential neighborhood, the potentially serious construction impacts, and a very new city staff, the INA results show this project requires a mid-to-high level of public involvement effort.

Define Public Involvement Resources

The project manager and the community relations lead decided that this project needed a public involvement consultant. An RFP was let, and the prime engineering consultant retained a public involvement firm for the project. The public involvement consultant worked with a King County community relations planner to conduct the full needs assessment, and then the consultant developed the public involvement plan and will implement the plan. A WTD media planner was designated to handle all the media for this project. Following county policy, graphic design and printing will be performed or arranged by King County staff.

Conduct Full Needs Assessment

The full needs assessment is captured in a table that the consultant compiled. See Figure A-1.

Figure A-1 Full Needs Assessment

Full Needs Assessment Results: Predesign, design and construction of the Frederick Cove pump station.

The community relations planner and the public involvement consultant worked with the project team and conducted the full needs assessment by asking the questions for each element. The following issues came out of the full needs assessment.

Element 1. Serious problem or opportunity that must be addressed.
Most community members recognize there is a problem. They've seen the explosive growth and realize that the pump station (which is 30 years old) cannot be adequate for the rate of growth.

Element 2. WTD is the right entity to address the problem.
There are some community members who think it is the local sewer district's responsibility to prevent odors. Others think that since they became a city recently, the pump station must now belong to the city. They formed a city because they wanted to be independent of the county.

Element 3. WTD's approach is reasonable, sensible and responsible.
There are a couple of interest groups who don't think the upgrade should be done. They think WTD should move the facility out of their city and into the unincorporated county. There is a group who says King County just does what it wants and will be building an expensive pump station just because they can.

Element 4. WTD is listening and does care about negative effects its actions may cause people.
Some community members don't think WTD will listen to them. That's why they incorporated, so they'd have more of a local voice. They believe WTD will just go ahead and plan and build the upgrade, without caring about what the community says.

Develop Public Involvement Plan

The public involvement consultant used the results of the full needs assessment to develop public involvement objectives. These objectives were then folded into the public involvement plan that the consultant provided to the project team to review. Figure A-2 shows how the consultant developed the objectives. The draft public involvement plan the consultant submitted for review to the project team is the final piece of the case study.

Figure A-2 Public Involvement Objectives

Objective 1: The community will be informed about the roles and responsibilities of WTD, the local sewer district, and the City of Frederick Cove.

Suggested tools and activities:
- Hold an open house to inform stakeholders about the project.
- Provide information about WTD's, the local sewer district's and the city's roles and responsibilities at the open house.
- Invite representatives from the sewer district and the city to participate in the open house.
- Include a discussion of roles and responsibilities in a project flier to be distributed around the neighborhood.

Objective 2: The community will understand the alternatives being studied; the process being used to select the preferred alternative; and the way community values are being sought from the community.

Suggested tools and activities:
- Present alternatives under consideration at an open house.
- Use workshops to explore community values for incorporation into design criteria.
- Develop a mailing list (both postal and electronic) to provide updates to interested parties.
- Conduct community interviews to determine community values, concerns and issues.

Objective 3: The community will be informed of opportunities for public comment; when decisions will be made; and what decisions have been made.

Suggested tools and activities:
- Publish newsletters or fliers containing updates on project status; key decision points; and summarizes community comment
- Present timeline for decisions and key points for public comment at the open house and in fliers
- Schedule briefings with local groups, neighborhood associations, etc. to share progress
- Use news releases to announce key milestones, decisions, etc.
- Work with city staff to insert articles in the city's newsletter and on its web site

Consider the Frederick Cove case study before reviewing the public involvement plan. The Frederick Cove Pump Station Upgrade is a long-term project. Predesign and design is expected to take up to two years. Construction will last at least 14 months. At the beginning of the project – based on the initial needs assessment, identification of stakeholders, and a full needs assessment – a public involvement plan was written (see page I-63 for plan). The public involvement work will be done by a community relations consultant. This project appears to be all wrapped up and planned in a comprehensive and predictable manner. But in public involvement work, the unexpected must always be expected.

Imagine that after a year of work on the predesign and design, the community has been brought along, educated, informed and offered meaningful opportunities for comment through well-designed meetings and design workshops, a regular series of fliers and fact sheets, and well-written stories in the local weekly newspaper. It appears as though all the construction issues have been anticipated and residents are ready to accept the impacts they know are necessary to protect their health and their environment.

Suppose salmon are discovered in Frederick Creek. Endangered Species Act issues complicate permitting. The well-oiled machine creaks to a halt as the permitting issues are ironed out with the local, state and now federal agencies that have gotten involved. People move in and out of the community. The consultant team's project manager accepts a job in Nebraska and moves on. The editor of the local weekly paper, who has been so supportive of the project and been so willing to run positive press, retires. The new editor is unsupportive and distrusts the county.

Or perhaps the project is permitted in a timely fashion, and construction begins. The construction crew encounters difficulty with their pile driving. Instead of the process taking eight to ten days, as was communicated to the community, it now will take up to four weeks. The soils are much more complicated than anyone expected, so the pace of the project slows to a crawl. The road around the pump station will be torn up for many months, instead of the tidy six weeks that was anticipated.

These, and any number of other events can influence the public involvement plan. In the case of Frederick Cove, or any other case, the plan presented is guidance that will be dynamic and constantly evolving.

Case Study - King County Frederick Cove Pump Station Public Involvement Plan

1. Goal of Public Involvement

The goal of public involvement is to support successful implementation of the Frederick Cove Pump Station Upgrade by identifying and responding to community concerns and input.

2. Objectives

A. General

The general objectives of the public involvement are to:

- Ensure the stakeholders and public understand why the pump station upgrade is necessary.
- Ensure the stakeholders and public understand that WTD's mission to protect human health and the environment means WTD must do this project.
- Ensure the stakeholders and public understand WTD's technical approach and process through all phases of the work (predesign, design and construction), and that it is reasonable, sensible and responsible.
- Ensure the stakeholders and public understands that WTD is listening, and will respond to and incorporate community issues and suggestions into key decisions at key project milestones to the extent possible.

B. Objectives by Project Phase

Different phases of the Frederick Cove Pump Station Upgrade have the following specific public involvement objectives.

Predesign

During predesign, the emphasis is on interaction with the community. The objectives are to:

- Provide information to assist the public in understanding the project, alternatives and proposed solutions.
- Coordinate public outreach with public notification requirements of SEPA review.
- Provide opportunities for public feedback on pump station design elements, such as aesthetics, architecture and landscape design.

Design

During design, the objectives are to:

- Provide feedback to the community how their input is being factored into the design process.

- Conduct regular communications to the community advising them of progress and decisions made.
- Prepare the community for construction impacts.
- Identify construction impacts and develop a plan for communications during construction.

Construction
During construction, the goal will be to minimize construction impacts where possible. The objectives are to:

- Keep the community informed of progress.
- Alert the community to impending impacts or major activities.
- Provide a communications method for community members to express concerns and ask questions.
- Respond to community concerns in a coordinated manner.

3. Target Audiences

A. External Audiences

Public

The primary project outreach area will be Frederick Cove and residents and businesses within three miles. There is a bustling community with several small shops and a deli three blocks from the pump station. An elementary school is located .5 mile from the pump station, and school bus routes cross through the proposed construction area. There is a heavily used park across the street from the pump station.

Key target audiences for this project include:
- Residents
- Frederick Cove Elementary School staff, students and parents
- Frederick Cove PTA
- Property managers of adjacent complex
- Frederick Cove Park users
- Local businesses
- Frederick Cove Homeowners Association
- Save Frederick Cove's Riparian Zone Association
- Frederick Cove Stream Team

During construction, the target audience will expand to include:
- Commuters
- Transit and school buses
- Service delivery companies (garbage, recycling, postal, express delivery, newspaper, etc.)

Agencies and Local Jurisdictions

The project team will also need to work closely with the City of Frederick Cove staff (permitting, public works, public information officer) during the project. Communications with permitting and right-of-way agencies, and the City will require coordination among members of the project team. The communications protocol and lead points of contact for each of these groups are outlined below. The public involvement team will maintain a mailing list to ensure these groups receive project updates.

Agency/Jurisdiction	Project Element	Communications Lead
City of Frederick Cove elected officials	Project updates / approvals	Project manager
City of Frederick Cove Planning Dept.	SEPA	Environmental planner
Southshore Utility District	Operations/design	Project manager

B. King County – Internal Audiences

It is important to make sure the project team has good communications with all internal DNRP staff as well as other King County officials as needed. To ensure these communications are well coordinated, the following protocol will be followed.

Agency/Jurisdiction	Project Element	County Communications Lead
Wastewater Treatment Division	All	Project manager
Water and Land Resources Division	Water quality monitoring/ourtreach	Community relations planner
Public Affairs Office	Media relations	Media specialist (w/community relations planner)
County Councilmember's Office	Project updates	Project manager

4. Potential Concerns and Messages

A. Concerns Identified to Date

There are a number of concerns that have been expressed about this project. Following is a list of the issues that have been identified to date. They have been organized into similar groups.

- Cost
  - The community is worried they will have to pay a high surcharge for the pump station upgrade.
  - There is concern that King County will build a very expensive facility, and rates will go up substantially.
  - Rate payers outside the city (unincorporated county) think they will end up paying for City of Frederick Cove amenities around the pump station.
- Environmental Quality

  - Some community members are concerned that the pump station is harmful to Frederick Creek
  - Water quality in Frederick Cove, and past beach closures, which some think are related to sewage.
  - Trees being taken out
- Current Facility
  - Operation of existing pump station (e.g., noise, trash)
  - It does not fit aesthetically with the neighborhood
  - It's so close to the park
- Construction Impacts
  - Noise
  - Dust
  - Traffic
  - Access to park during construction
  - Safety of kids at the park during construction
- Aesthetics
  - View from neighboring properties – what will the facility and grounds look like?

B. Emerging Issues

Some project elements are still under discussion or have not been developed yet. Those that may have community relations impacts include:

- Need for additional field work and public notification (e.g., TV viewing of force main)
- Force main alignments
- Plans for future use of existing pump station site
- Potential soil and groundwater contamination at the new site
- Coordination with ongoing operational issues, including public complaints

C. Key Messages

Key messages are the foundation of all communications with the public. The Wastewater Treatment Division's primary key message is protection of public health and the environment. Key messages help provide a context and emphasize the need for and benefits of a project.

Key messages for this project include:

- The Frederick Cove pump station is more than thirty years old. Upgrades are necessary to ensure safe and reliable operations in the future.
- The capacity of the pump station must be expanded to accommodate population growth in the area.
- King County will work closely with the City of Frederick Cove and community to identify and address community issues and concerns.

5. Public Involvement Activities and Tools Tied to Project Phases

Table 1 provides an initial roadmap for public involvement activities, tied to project phase. It also identifies project team coordination points.

Table 1 - Frederick Cove Public Involvement Plan

Dates	Project Activity	Public Information/Outreach Activity	Notes
Ongoing	All	• Project information contact • Periodic/monthly update fliers • News releases at key milestones • Issues management	• Planned documentation: Contact log Copies of all materials
April-June '03	Predesign • ROW and permitting agent obtain right of entry from property owner • County contractor installs groundwater monitoring wells and soil borings • Project team reaches decision points on key design recommendations	• Mini-flier distributed to immediate neighborhood impacted by geotechnical work • Conduct up-front analysis of impacts; develop public involvement plan • Develop contact method (mail, e-mail list, distribution method) • Identify key stakeholders and opinion leaders	
Summer '03	Predesign (SEPA review) • SEPA announcement keyed to public meeting • Public input on preliminary facility design and landscaping	• Flier announcing project and promoting public meeting • Contact City, business & community groups • Brief DNRP public affairs; news release evaluated • Community public meeting to share proposed design elements • Briefings as requested (e.g., neighborhood associations) • Begin to identify and address construction impacts	• Needed for public meeting: Facility renderings Landscape design/simple plant list Aerial map System map Project timeline • Identify opportunities for stakeholder input (decision points)
Fall 03– Fall 04	Design (and permitting, as need arises)	• Periodic project fliers as needed to share design decisions • Briefings as requested	

Dates	Project Activity	Public Information/Outreach Activity	Notes
		• Continue to identify and address construction impacts	
Fall 04	Bid and award contract	• Periodic project fliers as needed to communicate decisions, next step • Briefings as requested • Establish 24-hour construction hotline • Pre-construction community meeting	• Needed for open house: Aerial Construction schedule Traffic plan Construction plans
Spring 05– Spring '07	Construct pump station	• Project sign • Coffee with contractor (on-site open house) • Flier announcing start of construction • Coordination with City • Construction updates as needed • Construction hotline	• Pager/hotline log • Communications/ protocol

APPENDIX B: ABBREVIATED PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

King County ______________________ Public Involvement Plan
Name of project

1. Goal of Public Involvement

The goal of public involvement is to support successful implementation of the ___________ project.
(*name*)

2. Objectives

Based on the initial needs assessment, the objectives of the public involvement are to:

- Provide advanced notification of work being planned.
- Keep people apprised of progress, changes, etc.
- Provide means for people to ask questions, convey concerns, etc.
- Ensure reasonable and prompt responses to concerns, requests and complaints

3. Target Audiences

Public, Businesses, Organizations, Special Interest Groups, and Others

▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪

Agencies and Local Jurisdictions

▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪

4. Potential Concerns and Messages

❑ Concerns Identified to Date
List the areas checked in all sections of the initial needs assessment.

▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪

- Emerging Issues
  Based on discussions with the project manager, list open issues that may affect the project scope or target audiences.
  -
  -
  -
  -

- Key Messages
  Based on discussions with the project manager and team, determine key messages that describe the need for and benefits of the project.
  -
  -
  -
  -

5. Public Involvement Activities and Tools

Check key tools and activities selected, based on the initial needs assessment and identification of affected parties and their issues.

- ☐ Project Signs
- ☐ RWSP database
- ☐ News Releases
- ☐ Construction notices & updates
- ☐ Postcards
- ☐ Construction Hotlines
- ☐ Project Information Contact
- ☐ Fliers
- ☐ Open Houses
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

6. Public Involvement Activities Tied to Project Milestones

This table provides a roadmap for public involvement activities, tied to and coordinated with project activities or milestones.

Dates	**Project or Program Activity**	**Public Involvement / Outreach Activity**	**Notes**
Ex. - August	*Drilling for core samples*	*Flier to explain drilling and discuss potential impacts*	*Distribute to project mailing list*