Introduction to the IAP2 Spectrum

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The **International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)** is a world-spanning nonprofit organization that aims to "advance and extend the practice of public participation through professional development, certification, standards of practice, core values, advocacy and key initiatives with strategic partners around the world."

One of the most valuable tools that they have developed is the **Spectrum of Public Participation**, which outlines five different "levels" of engagement with a public partner or stakeholder and the associated promises that are implied when working with a public partner in that level. It is a valuable tool in both planning and reflection efforts, especially as institutional partners consider how to best align the language that describes public engagement efforts with the commitments made to public partners. Like many such tools, the concepts are relatively simple, and the challenge lies in fully living up to or embodying the promises implied by the language.

Please note: There are two versions of the IAP2 Spectrum in this document - the original (page 2) and one adapted from the original by the team at the Edward Ginsberg Center (page 3). The adaptation reflects a language shift away from the original fifth label on the spectrum ("empower") to the term "community ownership," which the Ginsberg Center and other campus partners prefer.

We encourage you to explore the IAP2 website for other tools and resources: https://iap2usa.org/

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Public Participation Spectrum



	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Community Ownership
Goal of Partnering	To provide public information that is objective and assist them in understanding	To obtain public feedback	To work directly with public to ensure viewpoint is considered	To partner with the public in every aspect of the decision	Final decision making is in public hands
Promise to Public	We will keep you (public/community) informed	We will listen to you, provide feedback, and show your input	We will ensure your opinion is reflected	We will look to you for advice and incorporate it as much as possible	We will implement what you decide

Reflect:

- Where does your engaged project currently fall along the spectrum?
- Where would you like to be? Do you know where your community partner would like it to be?

Act:

- What would you need to do differently to shift along the spectrum?
- What might be some barriers that make this shift difficult? What will you commit to doing to overcome those barriers?

Adapted from IAP2's Spectrum of Engagement:
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