

NEWSLETTER

July 2020

Stakeholder engagement in times of the pandemic

The times of holding huge public meetings in draughty school halls, with a registration table and endless technical presentations, and cold sausage rolls after the meeting, have long passed in my opinion, but if not, public participation (PP) practitioners have now been forced to look for alternative ways to engage with their stakeholders.

Chapter 6 had to be scrutinised again to understand whether public meetings or open houses were ever really required. The regulations are silent on the specific methods of gathering comments from interested and affected parties (I&APs), except for mentioning advertisements, letters, and site notices. The phrase “using reasonable, alternative methods” crops up all the time. So, what would be deemed reasonable alternative methods in the time of lockdown?

The Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP) issued guidelines with some of the following suggestions:

“With most gatherings banned in terms of the 29 April 2020 lockdown regulations, in-person public meetings and open days may not be held, but an environmental assessment practitioner or specialist could, in the public participation plan to be presented to DEA&DP, propose that virtual public meetings and virtual open days be held.

Reports may not be made available at places and premises closed to the public during the lockdown. Hard copies of reports should also not be submitted to DEA&DP.



Pre-application, draft, and revised reports must be made available to registered I&APs (and DEA&DP via the relevant official or, if the case has already been allocated, to the relevant case officer) for comment in electronic format (emails with pdf versions of report attached to an email or, if too large to attach to an email, to be made available via an electronic link accessible by the registered I&APs and DEA&DP).”

This may seem like a very reasonable alternative, but where large communities are your stakeholders, emails may not be easily accessible to all I&APs. However, research has shown that 80% of all rural communities have smart phones and sending of WhatsApp messages could be a way of communicating with stakeholders.

In addition, we may have to revert to telephonic consultation, although the record-keeping of telephonic comments is still problematic.

What methods have you found to be effective in doing legally defensible public participation? Share your views via our website, iap2sa.org/contact-us/, or by sending an email to admin2@iap2sa.org.

Keep safe and warm.

Erika du Plessis

Chair, IAP2 Southern Africa

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when you refer a new dues-paying member!
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share your views on ...

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN A CHANGING WORLD

The International Association for Public Participation is an international federation of over 6 000 public participation practitioners. A key objective of IAP2 is to advance the practice of 'P2'. For many members P2 is a familiar concept, and a well-defined context for their work. For many others, however, 'stakeholder engagement' better describes the focus of their professional activity.

Should we, as IAP2, be concerned that members grouped under the P2 banner use different descriptors, and probably offer services as either public participation (P2) or stakeholder engagement (SE) specialists? Is there really a difference, and does it matter?

I believe there is a material difference, in context and approach, in the reference frameworks and standards applied and sometimes in outcomes.

I don't want to elaborate my view here, however, I'd rather hear from the wider IAP2 SA family. **Please share your views on the following:**

- Are P2 and SE different in essence, or is the seeming divergence a matter of semantics?
- If different, in what ways?
- If you are an engagement specialist, do you feel at home in IAP2?
- Are the skills of P2 practitioners interchangeable with those of SE specialists? Should IAP2 modify the way it builds skills and develops public participation and/or stakeholder engagement practices to be more responsive to both domains?

Feel free to add additional thoughts and proposals to this conversation by emailing admin2@iap2sa.org. We will review and distil the member input and share the findings through the newsletter.

Tim Hart

IAP 2 SA deputy chair and member of the IAP2 international board



2019 Core Values Awards Members at Large Program

Aurecon took home the **International Members at Large Award for Project of the Year 2019** at the IAP2 Australasia Conference,

with the **BONEGA COMMUNITY TRUST ASSET MAPPING PROJECT.**

The ground-breaking, asset-based community development approach helped identify sustainable initiatives for the Limpopo community – follow the link for more information: <http://bit.ly/33ttWKR>.

The Bonega Community Trust Asset Mapping Project won the Africa Regional award and the Sustainability award section. It was the only project from Africa that went through to the finals!

ENTRIES FOR THE 2020 CORE VALUES AWARDS ARE DUE BY 31 JULY 2020.

For information and submission guidelines, visit:

http://iap2sa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/cvawards2020_members_at_larg.pdf

training news

IAP2 Southern Africa is currently exploring digital delivery offerings and innovative training materials for this new and challenging climate so that members can continue with their professional development and maximise new learning opportunities as they become available.

For more information, please get in touch with us at admin2@iap2sa.org.



Following social distancing protocol in a community leaders' meeting in Mossel Bay (photograph courtesy of Aurecon).

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